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LIFE AND VOYAGES

OF

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS.

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IA

A

HISTORY

OF THE

LIFE AND VOYAGES

OF

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS.

BY WASHINGTON IRVING.

Venient annis secula seris,
Quibus Oceanus vincula rerum
Laxet, et ingens pateat tellus,
Tiphysque novus detegat orbes,
Nec sit terris ultima Thule.—*Seneca. Medea.*

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

G. & C. CARVILL, 108 BROADWAY, NEW-YORK.

1828.

M eN

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Mar 1913

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Southern District of New-York, ss.

BE IT REMEMBERED, That on the 24th day of January, A. D. 1828, in the 52d year of the Independence of the United States of America, WASHINGTON IRVING, of the said District, has deposited in this office the title of a book, the right whereof he claims as author, in the words following, to wit:

"A History of the Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus. By Washington Irving.

'Venient annis secula seris,
Quibus Oceanus vincula rerum
Laxet, et ingens pateat tellus,
Tiphysque novus detegat orbes,
Nec sit terris ultima Thule.—*Seneca. Medea.*'"

In conformity to the Act of Congress of the United States, entitled "An Act for the encouragement of Learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts, and Books, to the authors and proprietors, of such copies during the time therein mentioned." And also to an Act, entitled "An Act supplementary to an Act, entitled an Act for the encouragement of Learning, by securing the copies of Maps, Charts, and Books, to the authors and proprietors of such copies, during the times therein mentioned, and extending the benefits thereof to the arts of designing, engraving, and etching historical and other Prints."

F. J. BETTS,
Clerk of the Southern District of New-York.

ELLIOTT AND PALMER, PRINTERS.

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PREFACE.

Being at Bordeaux in the winter of 1825–6, I received a letter from Mr. Alexander Everett, Minister Plenipotentiary of the United States at Madrid, informing me of a work then in the press, edited by Don Martin Fernandez de Navarrete, Secretary of the Royal Academy of History, &c. containing a collection of documents relative to the voyages of Columbus, among which were many of a highly important nature, recently discovered. Mr. Everett, at the same time, expressed an opinion that a version of the work into English, by one of our own country, would be peculiarly desirable. I concurred with him in the opinion, and, having for some time contem-

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plated a visit to Madrid, I shortly after set off for that capital, with an idea of undertaking, while there, the translation of the work.

Soon after my arrival, the publication of Mr. Navarrete made its appearance. I found it to contain many documents hitherto unknown, which threw additional lights on the discovery of the new world, and which reflected great credit on the researches of the learned editor. Still the whole presented rather a mass of rich materials for history, than a history itself. There were precious tracts for the mere man of research, but the sight of disjointed papers and official documents is apt to be repulsive to the general reader, who seeks for clear and connected narrative. These circumstances made me hesitate in my proposed undertaking; yet the subject was of so interesting and national a kind, that I could not willingly abandon it.

On considering the matter more maturely, I perceived that, although there were many books, in various languages, relative to Columbus, they all contained limited and incomplete accounts of his life and voyages; while numerous valuable

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tracts on the subject, existed only in manuscript, or in the form of letters, journals and public acts. It appeared to me that a history faithfully digested from these various materials, was a desideratum in literature, and would be a more satisfactory occupation to myself, and a more acceptable work to my country, than the translation I had contemplated.

I was encouraged to undertake such a work by the great facilities which I found within my reach at Madrid. I was resident under the roof of the American Consul, O. Rich, Esq., one of the most indefatigable bibliographers in Europe, and who for several years had made particular researches after every document relative to the early history of America. In his extensive and curious library I found one of the best collections extant of Spanish colonial history, containing many documents for which I might search elsewhere in vain. This he put at my absolute command, with a frankness and unreserve seldom to be met with among the possessors of such rare and valuable works; and his library has been my main resource throughout the whole course of my labours.

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I found also the royal library of Madrid, and the library of the Jesuits' college of San Isidro, two noble and extensive collections, open to access, and conducted with great order and liberality. From Don Martin de Navarrete I received the most obliging assistance, communicating various valuable and curious pieces of information, discovered in the course of his researches; nor can I refrain from testifying my admiration of the self-sustained zeal of that estimable man, one of the last veterans of Spanish literature; who is almost alone, yet indefatigable, in his labours, in a country where, at present, literary exertion meets but little excitement or reward.

I must acknowledge also the liberality of the Duke of Veraguas, the descendant and present representative of Columbus, who submitted the archives of his family to my inspection, and took a personal interest in exhibiting the treasures it contains. Nor lastly, must I omit my deep obligations to my excellent friend, Don Antonio de Ugina, treasurer of Prince Francisco; a gentleman of talents and erudition, and particularly versed in the history of his country and its de-

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pendencies. To his unwearied investigations and silent and unavowed contributions, the world is indebted for much of the accurate information recently imparted on points of early colonial history. In the possession of this gentleman are most of the papers of his deceased friend, the late historian Muñoz, who was cut off in the midst of his valuable labours. These, and various other documents, have been imparted to me by Don Antonio, with a kindness and urbanity which greatly increased, yet lightened the obligation.

With these and other aids incidentally afforded me by my local situation, I have endeavoured, to the best of my abilities, and the time I could allow myself, during a sojourn in a foreign country, to construct this history. I have diligently collated all the works that I could find relative to my subject, in print and manuscript, comparing them, as far as in my power, with original documents, those sure lights of historic research, endeavouring to ascertain the truth amid those contradictions which will inevitably occur, where several persons have recorded the same facts,

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viewing them from different points, and under the influence of different interests and feelings.

In the execution of this work I have avoided indulging in mere speculations or general reflections, except such as rose naturally out of the nature of the subject, preferring to give a minute and circumstantial narrative, omitting no particular that was characteristic of the persons, the events, or the times, and endeavouring to place every fact in such a point of view, that the reader might perceive its merits, and draw his own maxims and conclusions.

As many points of the history required explanations drawn from contemporary events, and the literature of the times, I have preferred, instead of encumbering the narrative, to give detached illustrations at the end of the work. This also enabled me to indulge in greater latitude of detail, where the subject was of a curious or interesting nature, and the sources of information such as not to be met with in the common course of reading.

After all, the work is presented to the public with extreme diffidence All that I can safely claim

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is an earnest desire to state the truth, an absence from prejudices respecting the nations mentioned in my history, a strong interest in my subject, and a zeal to make up by assiduity for the many deficiencies of which I was conscious.

W. I.

Madrid, October 18*th*, 1827.

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LIFE AND VOYAGES

OF

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS.

BOOK I.

WHETHER in old times, beyond the reach of history or tradition, and in some remote period of civilization, when, as some imagine, the arts may have flourished to a degree unknown to those whom we term the ancients, there existed an intercourse between the opposite shores of the Atlantic: whether the Egyptian legend narrated by Plato, respecting the island of Atalantis, was indeed no fable, but the obscure tradition of some vast country, engulphed by one of those mighty convulsions of our globe, which have left traces of the ocean on the summits of lofty mountains, must ever remain matters of vague and visionary speculation.

As far as authenticated history extends, nothing was known of Terra Firma, and the islands of the western hemisphere, until their discovery towards the close of the fifteenth century. A wandering bark may occasionally have lost sight of the land-marks of the old continents, and been

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driven by tempests across the wilderness of waters, long before the invention of the compass, but never returned to reveal the secrets of the ocean. And though, from time to time, some document has floated to the shores of the old world, giving to its wondering inhabitants evidences of land far beyond their watery horizon, yet no one ventured to spread a sail, and seek that land enveloped in mystery and peril. Or if the legends of the Scandinavian voyagers be correct, and their mysterious Vinland was the coast of Labrador or the shore of Newfoundland, they had but transient glimpses of the new world, leading to no certain or permanent knowledge, and in a little time lost again to mankind *.

Certain it is that at the beginning of the fifteenth century, when the most intelligent minds were seeking in every direction for the scattered lights of geographical knowledge, a profound ignorance prevailed among the learned as to the western regions of the Atlantic; its vast waters were regarded with awe and wonder; seeming to bound the world as with a chaos, into which conjecture could not penetrate, and enterprise feared to adventure. We need no greater proof of this than the description given of the Atlantic by Xerif al Edrisi, surnamed the Nubian, an eminent Arabian writer, whose countrymen were the boldest navigators of the middle ages, and possessed all that was then known of geography. "The ocean," he observes, "encircles the ultimate bounds of the inhabited earth, and all beyond it is unknown. No one has been able to verify any thing concerning it, on account of its difficult and perilous navigation, its great obscurity, its profound depth and fre-

* See Illustrations at the end of this work, article, "Scandinavian Discoveries."

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quent tempests, through fear of its mighty fishes, and its haughty winds; yet there are many islands in it, some peopled, others uninhabited. There is no mariner who dares to enter into its deep waters; or if any have done so, they have merely kept along its coasts, fearful of departing from them. The waves of this ocean, although they roll as high as mountains, yet maintain themselves without breaking; for if they broke it would be impossible for ship to plough them*."

It is the object of the following work, to relate the deeds and fortunes of the mariner, who first had the judgment to divine, and the intrepidity to brave, the mysteries of this perilous deep; and who, by his hardy genius, his inflexible constancy, and his heroic courage, brought the ends of the earth into communication with each other. The narrative of his troubled life is the link which connects the history of the old world with that of the new.

CHAPTER I.

BIRTH, PARENTAGE, AND EDUCATION OF COLUMBUS.

Of the early days of Christopher Columbus nothing certain is known. The time of his birth, his birth-place, his parentage, are all involved in obscurity; and such has been the perplexing ingenuity of commentators, that it is difficult to extricate the truth from the web of conjectures with which it is interwoven. Judging from the testimony of one

* Descript. of Spain, by Xerif Aledris, Conde's Spanish translation. Madrid, 1799.

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of his contemporaries and intimates*, he must have been born about the year 1435 or 1436. Several places contend for the honour of having given him birth; but it seems satisfactorily established that he was a native of the ancient city of Genoa. A like contention has arisen with respect to his lineage. More than one noble family has laid claim to him, since his name has become so illustrious as to confer rather than receive distinction. It is probable that all of these branches may have sprung from one common stock, though shaken asunder, and some of them cast down by the civil wars of Italy. It does not appear that there had been any nobility in his family, within the knowledge of himself or his contemporaries; nor is the fact material to his fame. It is certainly more honourable to his memory to be the object of contention among various noble families, than to be able to designate the most illustrious descent. His son Fernando, who wrote his history, and who made a journey to investigate the subject, tacitly relinquishes all claims of the kind; pronouncing it better that his family should date its glory from the Admiral, than look beyond him, to ascertain whether his predecessors had been ennobled, and had kept hawk and hound; "for I am of opinion," he adds, "that I should derive less dignity from any nobility of ancestry, than from being the son of such a father†."

The immediate parentage of Columbus was poor, though reputable and meritorious, his father being a wool-comber, long resident in the city of Genoa. He was the eldest of four children, having two brothers, Bartholomew and Gia-

* Andrez Bernaldez, commonly known as the Curate of Los Palacios. For remarks on the birth, birth-place, parentage, &c. of Columbus, see the Illustrations at the end of this work.

† Hist. del Almirante, Cap. II.

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como, or, as his name was translated into Spanish, Diego, and one sister, of whom nothing is known, excepting that she was married to a person in obscure life, called Giacomo Baverello.

The family name in Italian is Colombo: it was latinized into Columbus by himself in his earlier letters, and by others in their writings concerning him, in compliance with the usage of the times, when Latin was the general language of correspondence, and that in which every name of historical importance was written. The discoverer, however, is better known in Spanish history as Cristoval Colon, having altered his name when he removed to Spain. The principal reason given by his son for this alteration, was, that his descendants might be distinguished from collateral branches of the family. For this purpose, he recurred to what was supposed to be the Roman origin of the name, Colonus, which he abbreviated to Colon, to adapt it to the Castilian tongue. From his variety of appellations, the name of Columbus is retained in the present history as that by which he has been most generally known throughout the world.

His education was but limited, but as extensive, probably, as the indigent circumstances of his parents would permit. While quite a child, he was taught to read and write, and wrote so good a hand, says Las Casas, who possessed many of his manuscripts, that with it he might have earned his bread. To this succeeded arithmetic, drawing, and painting, and in these, observes Las Casas, he likewise acquired sufficient skill to have gained a livelihood*. He was sent for a short time to Pavia, the great school of learning in Lombardy. Here he studied grammar, and became well

* Las Casas' Hist. Ind. L. 1. Cap. 3. MS.

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acquainted with the Latin tongue. His education, however, was principally directed to those sciences necessary to fit him for maritime life. He was instructed in geometry, geography, astronomy, or, as it was at that time termed, astrology, and navigation*. He had at a very early age evinced a strong passion for geographical science, and an irresistible inclination for the sea; and he pursued with ardour every congenial study.

In the latter part of his life, when, in consequence of the great events which were brought about by his agency, he looked back upon his career with a solemn and superstitious feeling; he mentions this early determination of his mind as a secret impulse from the Deity, guiding him to the studies, and inspiring him with the inclinations, which should fit him for the high decrees he was chosen to accomplish†.

In tracing the early history of a man like Columbus, whose actions have had so vast an effect on human affairs, it is interesting to notice how much has been owing to the influence of events, and how much to an inborn propensity of the mind. The most original and inventive genius grows more or less out of the times; and that strong impulse, which Columbus considered as supernatural, is unconsciously produced by the operation of external circumstances. Every now and then, thought takes some sudden and general direction; either revisiting some long neglected region of knowledge, and exploring and reopening its forgotten paths, or breaking with wonder and delight into some fresh and untrodden field of discovery. It is then that an ardent and imaginative genius, catching the impulse of the day, outstrips all less gifted contemporaries; takes the lead of the

* Hist. del Almirante, Cap. 3.

† Letter to the Castilian sovereigns. 1501.

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throng by which it was first put in motion; and presses forward to achievements, which feebler spirits would never have adventured to attempt.

We find in Columbus an illustration of this remark. The strong passion for geographical knowledge, which he so early felt, and which gave rise to his after actions, was incident to the age in which he lived. Geographical discovery was the brilliant path of light, which was for ever to distinguish the fifteenth century; the most splendid era of invention in the annals of the world. During the long night of monkish bigotry and false learning, Geography with the other sciences had been lost to the European nations. Fortunately it had not been lost to mankind. It had taken refuge in the bosom of Africa. While the pedantic schoolmen of the cloisters were wasting time and talent, and confounding erudition by idle reveries, and sophistical dialectics, the Arabian sages, assembled at Sennaar, were taking the measurement of a degree of latitude, and calculating the circumference of the earth, on the vast plains of Mesopotamia.

True knowledge, thus happily preserved, was now making its way back to Europe. The revival of science accompanied the revival of letters. Among the various authors which the awakening zeal for ancient literature had once more brought into notice, were Pliny, Pomponius Mela, and Strabo. From these was regained a fund of geographical knowledge which had long faded from the public mind. Curiosity was aroused to pursue this forgotten path, thus suddenly reopened. A translation of the work of Ptolemy had been made into Latin, at the commencement of the century, by Emanuel Chrysoleras, a noble and learned Greek, and had thus been rendered more familiar to the Italian students. Another translation had followed, by James Angel de Scarpiaria, of which fair and beautiful co-

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pies became common in the Italian libraries*. The writings also began to be sought after, of Averroes, Alfraganus, and other Arabian sages, who had kept the sacred fire of science alive during the interval of European darkness.

The knowledge thus reviving was but limited and imperfect; yet, like the return of morning light, it was full of interest and beauty. It seemed to call a new creation into existence, and broke with all the charm of wonder upon imaginative minds. They were surprized at their own ignorance of the world around them. Every step seemed discovery, for every region beyond their native country was in a manner terra incognita.

Such was the state of information and feeling with respect to this interesting science, in the early part of the fifteenth century. An interest still more intense was awakening, from the discoveries that began to be made along the Atlantic coasts of Africa, and must have been particularly felt among a maritime and commercial people like the Genoese. To these circumstances may we ascribe the enthusiastic devotion which Columbus imbibed in his childhood for cosmographical studies, and which influenced all his after fortunes.

In considering his scanty education, it is worthy of notice how little he owed, from the very first, to adventitious aid; how much to the native energy of his character, and the fertility of his mind. The short time that he remained at Pavia was barely sufficient to give him the rudiments of the necessary sciences; the familiar acquaintance with them, which he evinced in after life, must have been the result of diligent self-schooling, and casual hours of study, amidst the cares and vicissitudes of a rugged and wandering life. He was one of those men of strong natural genius, who

* Andres Hist. B. Let. l. 3. c. 2.

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appear to form themselves; who from having to contend at their very outset, with privations and impediments, acquire an intrepidity to encounter, and a facility to vanquish difficulties, throughout their career. Such men learn to effect great purposes with small means, supplying this deficiency by the resources of their own energy and invention. This from his earliest commencement, throughout the whole of his life, was one of the remarkable features in the history of Columbus. In every undertaking, the scantiness and apparent insufficiency of his means enhance the grandeur of his achievements.

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CHAPTER II.

EARLY LIFE OF COLUMBUS.

COLUMBUS left the university of Pavia while yet extremely young, and returned to his father's house in Genoa. It has been asserted by Giustiniani, a contemporary writer, in his Annals of that Republic, and repeated by other historians*, that he remained for some time in Genoa, following his father's trade of wool-combing. The assertion is indignantly contradicted by his son Fernando, who, however, gives us no information to supply its place†. The opinion generally received is, that he immediately entered into nautical life, for which he had been educated, and to which he was prompted by his roving and enterprising disposition. He says himself that he began to navigate at fourteen years of age‡.

In a maritime city the sea has irresistible attractions for a youth of ardent curiosity, and his imagination pictures forth every thing fair and desirable beyond its waters. Genoa also, walled and straitened on the land side by rugged mountains, yielded but little scope for enterprize on shore, while an opulent and widely extended commerce visiting every country,

* Anton Gallo de Navigatione Colombi, &c. Muratori, T. 23. Barto. Senarega de rebus Genuensibus, Muratori, T. 24.

† Hist. del Almirante, C. 2.

‡ Ibid, C. 4.

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and a roving marine battling in every sea, naturally led forth her children upon the waves, as their propitious element. Foglieta, in his history of Genoa, speaks of the proneness of its youth to wander abroad in quest of fortune, with the intention of returning to settle in their native place; but that of twenty who thus departed scarce two returned; either dying, or marrying in other countries; or being deterred by the tempest of civil discords, which distracted the republic.*

The seafaring life of the Mediterranean, in those days, was made up of hazardous voyages and daring enterprizes. Even a commercial expedition resembled a warlike cruise; and the maritime merchant had often to fight his way from port to port. Piracy was almost legitimatized. The frequent feuds between the Italian states, the cruizings of the Catalonians, the armadas fitted out by private noblemen, who exercised a kind of sovereignty in their own domains, and kept petty armies and navies in their pay; the roving ships and squadrons of private adventurers, a kind of naval Condottieri, sometimes employed by hostile governments, sometimes scouring the seas in search of lawless booty; these, with the holy war continually waged against the Mahometan powers, rendered the narrow seas, to which navigation was principally confined, scenes of the most hardy encounters and trying reverses.

Such was the rugged school in which Columbus was reared, and it would have been deeply interesting to have marked the early development of his genius amidst its stern adversities. Surrounded by the hardships and humilities which beset a poor adventurer in a seafaring life, he still seems ever to have cherished a lofty tone of thought, and

* Foglieta Istoria de Genoua, L. 11.

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to have fed his imagination with schemes of glorious enterprize. The severe and varied lessons of his youth gave him that practical knowledge, that fertility of resource, that undaunted resolution, and vigilant self-command, for which he was afterwards remarkable. In this way, the fruits of bitter experience are turned to healthful aliment, by a vigorous genius and an aspiring mind.

All this instructive era of his history, however, is covered with darkness. His son Fernando, who could have best elucidated it, has left it in obscurity, or has now and then perplexed us with cross lights; perhaps unwilling, from a principle of mistaken pride, to reveal the indigence and obscurity from which his father so gloriously emerged. A few vague and scattered anecdotes are all that exist; but they are interesting, as giving glimpses of the chequered and adventurous life he must have led.

The first voyage in which we have any account of his being engaged, was a naval expedition, having for its object the recovery of a crown. An armament was fitted out at Genoa, in 1459, by John of Anjou, Duke of Calabria, to make a descent upon Naples, in the hope of recovering that kingdom for his father, king Reinel, or Renato, otherwise called Rene Count de Provence.

In this expedition, the Republic of Genoa took a part, furnishing ships and money. There were many private adventurers also, who fitted out ships or galleys, and engaged under the banner of Anjou. Among these, we are told, was a hardy sea captain, named Colombo. There were two naval characters of this name, an uncle and nephew, who had celebrity about this time, and who are claimed by Fernando Columbus as family connexions. They are mentioned occasionally by historians as French commanders, because

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Genoa was at that time under the protection or rather the sovereignty of France, and her ships and captains being engaged in the expeditions of that power, were identified with the French marine*. The names of these two sea captains occurring vaguely in history, from time to time, during the obscure part of the career of Columbus, have caused much perplexity to some of his biographers, who have supposed that they designated the discoverer†.

With these commanders he sailed on several occasions, and for a considerable length of time‡: and he is said to have embarked with the uncle in the expedition against Naples. There is no authority for this latter fact among the historians who were his contemporaries, none of whom indeed give any particulars of his early biography; but it has been repeatedly affirmed by later writers, and circumstances concur to give weight to the assertion. It is established that he at one time held a separate command in the service of this king of Naples, and was employed in a hardy enterprize to cut out a galley from the port of Tunis. This is incidentally mentioned by himself, in one of his letters to Ferdinand and Isabella, written many years afterwards. "It happened to me," he says, "that King Reinel (whom God has taken to himself) sent me to Tunis to capture the galley Fernandina, and when I arrived off the island of St. Pedro, in Sardinia, I was informed that there were two ships and a carrack with the galley; by which intelligence my crew were so troubled that they determined to proceed no further, but to return to Marseilles for another vessel and more people.

* Chaufepies, Supp. to Bayle, v. 2, p. 126.

† Vide Illustrations, article, "The Colombos."

‡ Hist. del Almirante, Cap. 5.

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As I could not by any means compel them, I assented apparently to their wishes, altering the point of the compass, and spreading all sail. It was then evening, and next morning we were within the Cape of Carthagena, while all were firmly of opinion that they were sailing toward Marseilles*."

We have no further record of this bold enterprize; but we behold in it strong indications of that determined and persevering spirit which ensured him success in his more important undertakings. His expedient to beguile a discontented crew, by deceiving them with respect to the ship's course, is in unison with the stratagem of altering the reckoning, to which he had recourse, for the same purpose, in his first voyage of discovery.

The struggle of John of Anjou, Duke of Calabria, for the crown of Naples, lasted about four years, with varied fortune, but was finally unsuccessful. The naval part of his expedition, in which it is presumed Columbus was frequently engaged, distinguished itself by intrepidity; and at one time, when the Duke was reduced to take refuge in the island of Ischia, a handful of galleys scoured and controlled the bay of Naples*.

There is an interval of many years during which we have but one or two shadowy traces of Columbus. He is supposed to have been principally engaged in the Mediterranean and up the Levant, sometimes in voyages of commerce, sometimes in warlike contests between the Italian States, sometimes in pious and predatory expeditions against the Infidels. Incidental mention is made, on his own authority, of his having been at the island of Scio, where he saw the mode

* Hist. del Almirante, Cap. 4.

† See Illustrations, article, "Expedition of John of Anjou."

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of procuring mastic*. Certain late authors imagine that they have discovered proofs of his having enjoyed an important command in the marine of his native country. Chaufepies, in his continuation of Bayle, cites a report that Columbus was in 1474 captain of several Genoese ships, in the service of Louis XI. of France, and that he attacked and took two Spanish galleys, as a reprisal for the Spaniards having made an irruption into Rouissillon; on account of which, King Ferdinand addressed a letter of remonstrance to the French monarch†. Bossi also, in his memoir of Columbus, mentions a letter found in the archives of Milan, written in 1476 by two illustrious Milanese gentlemen, on their return from Jerusalem, stating that in the previous year, when the Venetian fleet was stationed off Cyprus to guard the island, a Genoese squadron commanded by one Columbo brushed by them, shouting Viva San Giorgio! the war cry of Genoa, and were permitted to pass without molestation, the republics being then at peace‡. The Columbo mentioned in these two occurrences, was, in all probability, the old Genoese admiral of that name, who, according to Zurita, and other historians, commanded about that time a squadron, with which he convoyed the king of Portugal to the Mediterranean coast of France. As Columbus often sailed under his flag, he may have been with him on these occasions.

The last dubious trace of Columbus during this obscure period of his life, is given by his son Fernando, who assigns him a distinguished share in a naval exploit of Colombo the younger, nephew to the old admiral just mentioned, who he

* Hist. del Almirante, Cap. 4.

† Chaufepies, Sup. to Bayle, vol. 2, article, "Columbus."

‡ Bossi Hist. Colomb. Illust. No. 7.

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affirms, was a famous corsair, so terrible for his deeds against the Infidels, that the Moorish mothers used to frighten their unruly children with his name.

This bold rover having heard of four Venetian galleys richly laden, on their return voyage from Flanders, intercepted them with his squadron on the Portuguese coast, between Lisbon and Cape St. Vincent. A desperate engagement took place. The vessels grappled each other, and the crews fought hand to hand, and from ship to ship. The battle lasted from morning until evening, with great carnage on both sides. The vessel commanded by Columbus was engaged with a huge Venetian galley. They threw hand grenades and other fiery missiles; and the galley was wrapped in flames. The vessels were fastened together by chains and grappling irons, and could not be separated; both were involved in one conflagration, and soon became a mere blazing mass. The crews threw themselves into the sea. Columbus seized an oar, which was floating within reach, and being an expert swimmer, attained the shore, though full two leagues distant. After recovering strength he repaired to Lisbon, where he found many of his Genoese countrymen, and was induced to take up his residence*.

Such is the account given by Fernando of his father's first arrival in Portugal; and it has been currently adopted by modern historians. That Columbus may have been in this seafight is not impossible; but it took place many years after this period of his life. It is mentioned by several historians as having occurred in the summer of 1485, which was nearly a year after he had departed from Portugal. The only

* Hist. del Almirante, Cap. 5. See Illustrations at the end of this work, article, "Capture of the Venetian Galleys."

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way of accounting for the error, without impeaching the veracity of the historian, is to presume that Fernando may have confounded some other action, in which his father was concerned, with this, which he found recorded, without date, by Sabellicus.

Waving, therefore, as somewhat apocryphal, this romantic and heroical arrival of Columbus on the shores of Portugal, we shall find, in the great nautical enterprizes in which that kingdom was engaged at the time, ample attractions for a person of his character and pursuits. For this purpose, however, it is necessary to cast a glance over certain historical events connected with maritime discovery, which rendered Lisbon, at that moment, the great resort of men skilled in geographical and nautical science, from all parts of the world.

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CHAPTER III.

PROGRESS OF DISCOVERY UNDER PRINCE HENRY OF PORTUGAL.

THE career of modern discovery had commenced shortly before the time of Columbus, and the Atlantic coasts of Africa were at that period the scenes of nautical enterprize. Some have attributed its origin to an incident said to have occurred in the fourteenth century. An Englishman of the name of Macham, flying to France with a lady of whom he was enamoured, was driven far out of sight of land by stress of weather, and after wandering about the high seas, arrived at an unknown and uninhabited island covered with beautiful forests, which was afterwards called Madeira*. Others have treated this account as a fable, and have pronounced the Canaries to be the first fruits of modern discovery. This famous group, the Fortunate islands of the ancients, in which they placed their Garden of the Hesperides, from whence Ptolemy commenced to count the longitude, had been long lost to the world.

There are vague accounts, it is true, of their having received casual visits at wide intervals during the obscure ages, from the wandering bark of some Arabian, Norman, or Genoese adventurer, but all this was involved in uncertainty, and led to no beneficial result. It was not until the fourteenth century, that they were effectually rediscovered, and restored to mankind. From that time they were

* See Illustrations, article, "Discovery of Madeira."

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occasionally visited by the hardy navigators of various countries. The greatest benefit produced by their discovery was, that the frequent expeditions made to them emboldened mariners to venture far upon the Atlantic, and familiarized them, in some degree, to its dangers.

The grand impulse to discovery was not given by chance, but was the deeply meditated effort of one master mind. This was Prince Henry of Portugal, son of John the first, surnamed the Avenger, and Philippa of Lancaster, sister of Henry the fourth of England. The character of this illustrious man, from whose enterprizes the genius of Columbus took excitement, deserves particular mention.

At an early age, Prince Henry accompanied his father into Africa, in an expedition against the Moors, in which he planted his victorious banners on the walls of Ceuta. Henry signalized himself repeatedly in this campaign. His passion, however, was more for arts than arms, and he pursued, even amidst the din of war, those inquiries most worthy of a prince.

While at Ceuta, he received much information from the Moors concerning the interior of Africa, and the coast of Guinea, regions unknown to Europeans. He conceived an idea that important discoveries were to be made, by navigating along the western coast of Africa. On returning to Portugal, this idea became his ruling thought. Withdrawing himself from the tumult of a court, he buried himself in retirement, in a country retreat in the Algarves, near to Sagres, in the neighbourhood of Cape St. Vincent, and in full view of the ocean. Here he drew around him men eminent in science; and prosecuted the study of those branches of knowledge connected with the maritime arts. He was an able mathematician, and made himself master of all the astronomy known to the Arabians of Spain.

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On studying the works of the ancients, Prince Henry had found what he considered abundant proofs that Africa was circumnavigable, so that it was possible, by keeping along its shores, to arrive at India. He had been struck with the account given of the voyage of Eudoxus of Cyzicus, who was said to have sailed from the Red sea into the ocean, and to have continued on to Gibraltar; which appeared to be corroborated by the expedition of Hanno the Carthagenian, who, sailing from Gibraltar with a fleet of sixty ships, and following the African coast, was said to have reached the shores of Arabia*. It is true these voyages had been discredited by several ancient writers, and the possibility of circumnavigating Africa, after being for a long time admitted by geographers, had been denied by Hipparchus, and since his time had continued to be disbelieved. He considered each sea as shut up and land-bound in its particular basin, and that Africa was a continent continuing onward to the south pole, and surrounding the Indian sea, so as to join Asia beyond the Ganges. This opinion had been adopted and perpetuated by Ptolemy, whose works, in the time of Prince Henry, were the highest authority in geography. Still the Prince reverted to the ancient belief that Africa was circumnavigable, and he found his opinion sanctioned by various learned men of more modern date. To settle this question, and to achieve the circumnavigation of Africa, was an object worthy the ambition of a prince, and his mind was fired with the idea of the vast benefits that would arise to his country, should it be accomplished by Portuguese enterprize.

The Italians, or, as they were called in the north of Europe, the Lombards, had long monopolized the opulent

* See Illustrations, article, "Circumnavigation of Africa by the ancients."

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trade of Asia. They had formed establishments at Constantinople, and in the Black sea, where they received the rich produce of the spice islands, which lie near the Equator, and the silks, the gums, the perfumes, the precious stones, and the other luxurious commodities of Egypt and Southern Asia, and distributed them over the whole of Europe. The Republics of Venice and Genoa rose to power and opulence in consequence of this trade. They had factories in the most remote parts, even in the frozen regions of Moscovy and Norway. Their merchants emulated the magnificence of princes. All Europe was tributary to their commerce. Yet this trade had to be carried on with the distant countries of the east by the most circuitous and expensive routes. It passed through various intermediate hands, and was subjected to the delays and charges of internal navigation, and the tedious and uncertain journeys of the caravan. For a long time, the merchandise of India had to be conveyed by the Gulf of Persia, the Euphrates, the Indus, and the Oxus, to the Caspian and the Mediterranean seas; thence to take a new destination for the various marts of Europe. After the Soldan of Egypt had conquered the Arabs, and restored trade to its ancient channel, it was still attended with great cost and delay. Its precious commodities had to be conveyed by the Red sea, thence on camels' backs to the banks of the Nile, whence they were transported to Egypt, to meet the Italian merchants. Thus, while the opulent traffic of the east was engrossed by these adventurous monopolists, the price of every article was enhanced by the great expense of transportation.

It was the grand idea of Prince Henry, by circumnavigating Africa, to open a direct and easy route to the source of this commerce; to turn it suddenly into a new and simple channel, and to pour it out in a golden tide upon his country. Henry, however, was before the age in thought.

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He had to counteract the ignorance and prejudices of mankind: and to endure the delays to which vivid and penetrating minds are subjected, from the tardy co-operations of the dull and the doubtful.

The navigation of the Atlantic was yet in its infancy; and, however some might have ventured a little way upon it, still mariners looked with distrust upon a boisterous expanse, which appeared to have no opposite shore. In their voyages they still kept close to the coast, fearful of venturing out of sight of those land-marks which guided their timid navigation. Every bold head-land, and far-stretching promontory, was a wall to bar their progress. They crept timorously along the Barbary shores, and thought they had accomplished a wonderful expedition, when they had ventured a few degrees beyond the straits of Gibraltar. Cape Non, the termination of ancient enterprize, was long the limit of their daring: they hesitated to double its rocky point, beaten by winds and waves, and threatening to thrust them forth upon the raging deep.

Independent of these vague fears, they had others, sanctioned by philosophy itself. The ancient theory of the Zones was currently believed. They still thought that the earth, at the equator, was girdled by a torrid zone, over which the sun held his vertical and fiery course, separating the hemispheres by a region of impassive heat. The credulous seamen fancied Cape Bojador the utmost boundary of secure enterprize. They had a superstitious belief that whoever doubled it would never return*. They looked with dismay upon the rapid currents of its neighbourhood, and the furious surf which beats upon its arid coast. They imagined beyond it the frightful region of the torrid zone,

* Mariana, Hist. Esp. Lib. 2, Cap. 22.

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scorched by a blazing sun, a region of fire, where the very waves, which beat upon the shores, boiled under the intolerable fervour of the heavens.

To dispel these errors, and to give a scope to navigation, equal to the grandeur of his designs, Prince Henry called in the aid of science. He established a naval college and erected an observatory at Sagres, and invited thither the most eminent professors of the nautical faculties; appointing as president James of Mallorca, a man learned in navigation, and skilful in making charts and instruments.

The effects of this establishment were soon apparent. All that was known relative to geography and navigation was gathered together and reduced to system. A vast improvement took place in maps. The compass was also brought into more general use, especially among the Portuguese, rendering the mariner more bold and venturous, by enabling him to navigate in the most gloomy day, and in the darkest night.

Encouraged by these advantages, and stimulated by the munificence of Prince Henry, the Portuguese marine became signalized for the hardihood of its enterprizes, and the extent of its discoveries. Cape Bojador was doubled, the region of the tropics penetrated, and divested of its fancied terrors; the greater part of the African coast, from Cape Blanco to Cape de Verd, explored, and the Cape de Verd and Azore islands, which lay three hundred leagues distant from the continent, were rescued from the oblivious empire of the ocean.

To secure the quiet prosecution and full enjoyment of his discoveries, Henry obtained the protection of a papal bull; granting to the crown of Portugal sovereign authority over all the lands it might discover in the Atlantic, to India inclusive, with plenary indulgence to all who should die in these

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expeditions; at the same time menacing with the terrors of the church, all who should interfere in these Christian conquests*.

Henry died on the 13th of November, 1473, without accomplishing the great object of his ambition. It was not until many years afterwards, that Vasquez de Gama, pursuing with a Portuguese fleet the track he had pointed out, realized his anticipations, by doubling the Cape of Good Hope, sailing along the southern coast of India, and thus opening a highway for commerce to the opulent regions of the east. Henry, however, lived long enough to reap some of the richest rewards of a great and good mind. He beheld, through his means, his native country in a grand and active career of prosperity. The discoveries of the Portuguese were the theme of wonder and admiration of the fifteenth century; and Portugal, from being one of the least among nations, suddenly rose to be one of the most important.

All this was effected, not by arms, but by arts; not by the stratagems of a cabinet, but by the wisdom of a college. It was the great achievement of a prince, who has well been described, "full of thoughts of lofty enterprize and acts of generous spirit." One who bore for his device the magnanimous motto, "The talent to do good,"—the only talent worthy the ambition of princes†.

Henry, at his death, left it in charge to his country to prosecute the route to India. He had formed companies and associations, by which commercial zeal was enlisted in the cause, and it was made a matter of interest and competition to enterprising individuals‡. From time to time, Lisbon was

* Vasconceles, Hist. de Juan II.

† Joam de Barros, Asia, Decad. 1.

‡ Lafitau, Conquestes des Portugais, T. 1. L. 1.

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thrown into a tumult of excitement by the launching forth of some new expedition, or the return of a squadron with accounts of new tracts explored, and new kingdoms visited. Every thing was confident promise, and sanguine anticipation. The miserable hordes of the African coast were magnified into powerful nations; and the voyagers continually heard of opulent countries farther on. It was as yet the twilight of geographic knowledge; imagination went hand in hand with discovery; and as the latter groped its slow and cautious way, the former peopled all beyond with wonders. The fame of the Portuguese discoveries, and of the expeditions continually fitting out, drew the attention of the world. Strangers from all parts, the learned, the curious, and the adventurous, resorted to Lisbon to inquire into the particulars or to participate in the advantages of these enterprizes. Among these was Christopher Columbus, whether thrown there as has been asserted by the fortuitous result of a desperate adventure, or drawn thither by liberal curiosity, and the pursuit of honourable fortune*.

* Herrera, Decad. 1, lib. 1.

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CHAPTER IV.

RESIDENCE OF COLUMBUS AT LISBON—IDEAS CONCERNING ISLANDS IN THE OCEAN.

COLUMBUS arrived at Lisbon about the year 1470. He was at that time in the full vigour of manhood, and of an engaging presence.. Minute descriptions are given of his person by his son Fernando, by Las Casas, and others of his contemporaries*. According to these accounts he was tall, well formed, muscular, and of an elevated and dignified demeanour. His visage was long, and neither full nor meagre, his complexion fair and freckled, and inclined to ruddy, his nose aquiline, his cheek bones were rather high, his eyes light grey, and apt to enkindle: his whole countenance had an air of authority. His hair, in his youthful days, was of a light colour, but care and trouble, according to Las Casas, soon turned it grey, and at thirty years of age it was quite white. He was moderate and simple in diet and apparel, eloquent in discourse, engaging and affable with strangers, and of an amiableness and suavity in domestic life that strongly attached his household to his person. His temper was naturally irritable†, but he subdued it by the magnanimity of his spirit; comporting himself with a courteous and

* Hist. del Amirante, Cap. 3. Las Casas, Hist. Ind. L. 1, C. 2. MS.

† Illescas, Hist. Pontifical, L. 6.

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gentle gravity, and never indulging in any intemperance of language. Throughout his life he was noted for a strict attention to the offices of religion, observing rigorously the fasts and ceremonies of the church; nor did his piety consist in mere forms; but partook of that lofty and solemn enthusiasm with which his whole character was strongly tinctured.

While at Lisbon, he was accustomed to attend religious service at the chapel of the convent of All Saints. In this convent there were certain ladies of rank, either resident as boarders or in some religious capacity. With one of these, Doña Felipa Moñis de Palestrello, Columbus became acquainted. She was the daughter of Bartolomeo Moñis de Palestrello, an Italian cavalier, who had been one of the most distinguished navigators under Prince Henry, and had colonised and governed the island of Porto Santo*. The acquaintance soon ripened into strong attachment, and ended in marriage. It appears to have been a match of mere affection, for the lady was destitute of fortune.

This union fixed Columbus in Lisbon. The father of his wife being dead, the newly married couple went to reside with the mother. The latter, perceiving the interest which her son-in-law took in all matters concerning the sea, related to him all she knew of the voyages and expeditions of her late husband, and brought him all his papers, the charts, the journals and memorandums. These were treasures to Columbus. He acquainted himself with all the routes of the Portuguese; their plans and conceptions; and having by his marriage and residence become naturalized in Portugal, he sailed occasionally in the expeditions to the coast of Gui-

* Hist. del Almirante, Cap. 5. Las Casas, Hist. Ind. L. 1, C. 4.

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nea. When on shore, his time was occupied in making maps and charts, for the support of his family. His circumstances were limited, and he had to observe a strict economy; yet we are told that he appropriated a part of his scanty means to the succour of his aged father at Genoa*, and to the education of his younger brothers†.

The construction of a correct map or chart, in those days, required a degree of knowledge and experience sufficient to entitle the possessor to distinction. Geography was but just emerging from the darkness which had enveloped it for ages. Ptolemy was still a standard authority. The maps of the fifteenth century display a mixture of truth and error, in which facts handed down from antiquity, and others revealed by recent discoveries, are confused with popular fables and extravagant conjectures. At such a period, when the passion for maritime discovery was seeking every aid to facilitate its enterprizes, the knowledge and skill of an able cosmographer, like Columbus, would be properly appreciated, and the superior correctness of his maps and charts, would give him notoriety among men of science.‡

* Oviedo, Cronica de las Indias, L. 2, C. 2.

† Muñoz. Hist. del N. Mundo, L. 2.

‡ The importance which began to be attached to cosmographical knowledge, is evident from the distinction which Mauro, an Italian Friar, obtained, from having projected an universal map, esteemed the most accurate of the time. The Venetians struck a medal in honour of him, on which they denominated him Cosmographus incomparabilis, (Colline dell Bussol. Naut. p. 2, c. 5.) Yet Ramusio, who had seen this map in the Monastery of Santo Michele de Murano, considers it merely an improved copy of a map brought from Cathay by Marco Polo (Ramusio 7, 2. p. 17, ed. Venet. 1606.) We are told also that Americus Vespucius paid one hundred and thirty ducats, equivalent to 555 dollars in

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We accordingly find him, at an early period of his residence, in Lisbon, in correspondence with Paulo Toscanelli of Florence, one of the most scientific men of the day, whose communications had great influence in inspiriting him to his subsequent undertakings.

While his geographical labours thus elevated him to a communion with the learned, they were peculiarly calculated to foster a train of thought favourable to nautical enterprize. From constantly comparing maps and charts, and noting the progress and direction of discovery, he was led to perceive how much of the world remained yet unknown, and to meditate on the means of exploring it. His domestic concerns, and the connexions he had formed by marriage, were calculated to foster this vein of speculation. He resided for some time at the recently discovered island of Porto Santo, where his wife had inherited some property; and during his residence there she bore him a son, whom he named Diego. This residence brought him as it were on the very frontiers of discovery. His wife's sister was married to Pedro Correo, a navigator of note, who had at one time been Governor of Porto Santo. Being frequently together in the familiar intercourse of domestic life, their conversation naturally turned upon the discoveries prosecuting in their vicinity along the African coast, upon the long sought for route to India, and upon the possibility of some unknown lands existing in the west.

In their island residence too, they must have been frequently visited by the voyagers going to and from Guinea. Living thus surrounded by the stir and bustle of discovery,

our time, for a map of sea and land, made at Mallorca, in 1439, by Gabriel de Valesca. (Barros. D. 1, L. 1, C. 15.) Derrolo por Tafiño Introd. p. 25.

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communing with persons who had risen by it to fortune and honour, and voyaging in the very tracks of its recent triumphs, the ardent mind of Columbus kindled up to enthusiasm in the cause. It was a period of general excitement to all who were connected with maritime life, or who resided in the vicinity of the ocean. The recent discoveries had inflamed their imaginations, and had filled them with visions of other islands, of greater wealth and beauty, yet to be discovered in the boundless wastes of the Atlantic. The opinions and fancies of the ancients on the subject, were again put into circulation. The story of Antilla, a great island in the ocean discovered by the Carthagenians, was frequently cited; and Plato's imaginary Atalantis once more found firm believers. Many thought that the Canaries and Azores were but wrecks which had survived its submersion, and that other and larger tracts of that drowned land might yet exist, in remoter parts of the Atlantic.

One of the strongest symptoms of the excited state of the popular mind at this eventful era, was the prevalence of rumours respecting unknown islands casually seen in the ocean. Many of these were mere fables, fabricated to feed the predominant humour of the public; many had their origin in the self-deception of voyagers, whose heated imaginations beheld islands in those summer clouds which lie along the horizon, and often beguile the sailor with the idea of distant land.

One Antonio Leone, an inhabitant of Madeira, told Columbus that sailing westward one hundred leagues, he had seen three islands at a distance. But the tales of the kind most positively advanced and zealously maintained, were those related by the people of the Canaries, who were long under a singular optical delusion. They imagined that, from time to time, they beheld a vast island to the westward, with lofty mountains and deep valleys. Nor was it seen in

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cloudy and dubious weather, but in those clear days common to tropical climates, and with all the distinctness with which distant objects may be discerned, in their pure, transparent atmosphere. The island it is true was only seen at intervals, while at other times, and in the clearest weather, not a vestige of it was to be descried. When it did appear, however, it was always in the same place and under the same form. So persuaded were the inhabitants of the Canaries of its reality, that application was made to the king of Portugal for permission to discover and take possession of it; and it actually became the object of various expeditions. The island, however, was never to be found, though it still continued occasionally to cheat the eye.

There were all kinds of wild and fantastic notions concerning this imaginary land. Some supposed it to be the Antilla mentioned by Aristotle; others the island of Seven Cities, so called from an ancient legend of seven bishops, who with a multitude of followers fled from Spain at the time of its conquest by the Moors, and, guided by heaven to some unknown island in the ocean, founded on it seven splendid cities; while some considered it another legendary island, on which it was said a Scottish priest of the name of St. Brandan had landed in the sixth century. This last legend passed into current belief. The fancied island was called by the name of St. Brandan or St. Borondon, and long continued to be actually laid down in maps far to the west of the Canaries*. The same was done with the fabulous island of Antilla; and these erroneous maps and phantom islands have given rise, at various times, to assertions that the new world had been known prior to the period of its generally reputed discovery.

* See Illustrations, article, "Island of St. Brandan."

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Columbus, however, considers all these appearances of land as mere illusions. He supposes that they may have been caused by rocks lying in the ocean, which seen at a distance, under certain atmospherical influences, may have assumed the appearance of islands: or that they may have been floating islands, such as are mentioned by Pliny and Seneca, and others, formed of twisted roots, or of light and porous stone, and covered with trees, and which may have been driven about the ocean by the winds.

The islands of St. Brandan, of Antilla, and of the Seven Cities, have long since proved to be fabulous tales or atmospherical delusions: yet the rumours concerning them derive interest from showing the state of public thought with respect to the Atlantic, while its western regions were yet unknown. They were all noted down with curious care by Columbus, and may have had some influence over his imagination; still, though of a visionary spirit, his penetrating genius sought in deeper sources for the aliment of its meditations. Aroused by the impulse of passing events, he turned anew, says his son Fernando, to study the geographical authors which he had read before, and to consider the astronomical reasons which might corroborate the theory gradually forming in his mind. He made himself acquainted with all that had been written by the ancients, or discovered by the moderns, relative to geography. His own voyages enabled him to correct many of their errors, and appreciate many of their theories. His genius having thus taken its decided bent, it is interesting to notice from what a mass of acknowledged facts, rational hypotheses, fanciful narratives, and popular rumours, his grand project of discovery was wrought out by the strong workings of his vigorous mind.

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CHAPTER V.

GROUNDS ON WHICH COLUMBUS FOUNDED HIS BELIEF OF THE EXISTENCE OF UNDISCOVERED LANDS IN THE WEST.

It has been attempted, in the preceding chapters, to show how Columbus was gradually kindled up to his grand design by the spirit and events of the times in which he lived. His son Fernando, however, undertakes to furnish the precise data on which his father's plan of discovery was founded. He does this, he observes, to show from what slender argument so great a scheme was fabricated and brought to light, and for the purpose of satisfying those who may desire to know distinctly the circumstances and motives which led his father to undertake this enterprize.

As this statement was formed from notes and documents found among his father's papers, it is too curious and interesting not to deserve particular mention. In this memorandum he arranged the foundation of his father's theory under three heads. 1. The nature of things. 2. The authority of learned writers. 3. The reports of navigators.

Under the first head he set down, as a fundamental and established principle, that the earth was a terraqueous sphere or globe, which might be travelled round from east to west, and that men stood foot to foot when on opposite points. The circumference from east to west, at the Equator, Co-

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lumbus divided, according to Ptolemy, into twenty-four hours, of fifteen degrees each, making 360 degrees. Of these he imagined, comparing the globe of Ptolemy with the earlier map of Marinus Tyrius, that fifteen hours had been known to the ancients, extending from the Straits of Gibraltar, or rather from the Canary islands, to the city of Thinæ in Asia, a place set down as at the eastern limits of the known world. The Portuguese had advanced the western frontier by the discovery of the Azores and Cape de Verd islands, equal to one hour more. There remained, according to the estimation of Columbus, eight hours, or one third of the circumference of the earth, unknown and unexplored. This space might, in a great measure, be filled up by the eastern regions of Asia, which might extend so far as nearly to surround the globe, and to approach the western shores of Europe and Africa. The tract of ocean intervening between these continents, he observes, would be less than might at first be supposed, if the opinion of Alfranganus the Arabian were admitted, who gave to the earth a smaller circumference, by diminishing the size of the degrees, than did other cosmographers; a theory to which Columbus seems at times to have given faith. Granting these premises, it was manifest that by pursuing a direct course, from east to west, a navigator would arrive at the extremity of Asia, and discover any intervening land.

Under the second head are named the authors whose writings had weight in convincing him that the intervening space of ocean could be but moderate, and easy to be traversed. Among these he cites the opinions of Aristotle, Seneca and Pliny, that one might pass from Cadiz to the Indias in a few days. Of Strabo also, who observes that the ocean surrounds the earth, bathing on the east the shores of India, on the west the coasts of Spain and Mauritania; so

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that it is easy to navigate from one to the other on the same parallel*.

In corroboration of the idea that Asia, or as he always terms it, India, stretched far to the east, so as to occupy the greater part of the unexplored space, the narratives are cited of Marco Polo and John Mandeville. These travellers had visited, in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, the remote parts of Asia, far beyond the regions laid down by Ptolemy, and their accounts of the extent of that continent to the eastward, had a great effect in convincing Columbus, that a moderate voyage to the west would bring him to its shores, or to the extensive and wealthy islands which lie adjacent. The information concerning Marco Polo is probably derived from Paulo Toscanelli, a celebrated Doctor of Florence, already mentioned, with whom Columbus corresponded in 1474, and who transmitted to him a copy of a letter, which he had previously written to Fernando Martinez, a learned canon of Lisbon. This letter maintains the facility of arriving at India by a western course, asserting the distance to be but four thousand miles, in a direct line from Lisbon to the province of Mangi near Cathay, since determined to be the northern coast of China. Of this country he gives a magnificent description, drawn from the work of Marco Polo. He adds, that in the route lay the islands of Antilla and Cipango, distant from each other only two hundred and twenty-five leagues, abounding in riches, and offering convenient places for ships to touch at, and obtain supplies, on the voyage.

Under the third head are enumerated various indications of land in the west, which had floated to the shores of the known world.

* Srab. Cos. lib. 1, 2.

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It is curious to observe, how, when once the mind of Columbus had become heated in the inquiry, it attracted to it every corroborating circumstance, however vague and trivial. He appears to have been particularly attentive to the gleams of information derived from veteran mariners, who had been employed in recent voyages to the African coast, and from the inhabitants of lately discovered islands, placed in a manner on the frontier posts of geographical knowledge. All these are carefully noted down among his memorandums, to be collocated with the facts and opinions already stored up in his mind.

Such, for instance, is the circumstance related to him by Martin Vicenti, a pilot in the service of the king of Portugal; that after sailing four hundred and fifty leagues to the west of Cape St. Vincent, he had taken from the water a piece of carved wood, which evidently had not been laboured with an iron instrument. As the winds had drifted it from the west, it might have come from some unknown land in that direction.

Pedro Correa, brother-in-law of Columbus, is likewise cited, as having seen on the island of Porto Santo a similar piece of wood, which had drifted from the same quarter. He had heard also from the king of Portugal, that reeds of an immense size had floated to some of those islands from the west, in the description of which Columbus thought he recognized the immense reeds, said by Ptolemy to grow in India.

Information is likewise noted, given him by the inhabitants of the Azores, of trunks of huge pine trees, of a kind that did not grow upon any of those islands, wafted to their shores by the westerly winds; but especially of the bodies of two dead men, cast upon the island of Flores, whose features differed from those of any known race of people.

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To these is added the report of a mariner of Port St. Mary, who asserted that he had seen land to the west in the course of a voyage to Ireland, which the ship's company took for some extreme part of Tartary. Other stories of a similar kind are noted, as well as rumours of the fancied islands of St. Brandan, and of the Seven Cities, to which last, as has been already observed, Columbus gave but little faith.

Such is an abstract of the grounds on which, according to Fernando, his father proceeded from one position to another, until he came to the conclusion that there was undiscovered land in the western part of the ocean, that it was attainable, that it was fertile, and finally that it was inhabited.

It is evident that several of the facts herein enumerated, must have become known to Columbus after he had formed his opinion, and merely served to strengthen it; still every thing that throws any light upon the progress of thought which led to so great an event, is of the highest interest; and the chain of deductions here furnished, though not perhaps the most logical in its concatenation, yet, being extracted from the papers of Columbus himself, remains one of the most interesting documents in the history of the human mind.

On considering this statement attentively, it is apparent that the grand argument which induced Columbus to his enterprize was that placed under the first head; namely, that the most eastern part of Asia known to the ancients could not be separated from the Azores by more than a third of the circumference of the globe; that the intervening space must, in a great measure, be filled up by the unknown residue of Asia, and that, as the circumference of the world was less than was generally supposed, the Asiatic shores could easily be attained by a moderate voyage to the west.

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It is singular how much the success of this great undertaking depended upon two happy errors, the imaginary extent of Asia to the east, and the supposed smallness of the earth, both errors of the most learned and profound philosophers, but without which Columbus would hardly have ventured upon his enterprize. As to the idea of finding land by sailing directly to the west, familiarity has rendered it so simple and obvious as to diminish with some the merits of the first conception, and the hardihood of the first attempt. But in those days, as has well been observed, the circumference of the earth was yet unknown; no one could tell whether the ocean were not of immense extent, impossible to be traversed; nor were the laws of specific gravity and of central gravitation ascertained, by which, granting the rotundity of the earth, the possibility of making the tour of it would be manifest*. The practicability, therefore, of finding land by sailing to the west, was one of those mysteries of nature which are considered incredible while matters of mere speculation, but the simplest things imaginable when they have once been ascertained.

When Columbus had formed his theory, it is singular the firmness with which it became fixed in his mind, and the effect it produced upon his character and conduct. He never spoke in doubt or hesitation, but with as much certainty as if his eyes had beheld the promised land. No trial nor disappointment could afterwards divert him from the steady pursuit of his object. A deep religious sentiment mingled with his meditations, and gave them at times a tinge of superstition, but it was of a sublime and lofty kind. He looked upon himself as standing in the hand of heaven,

* Malte-Brun, Geographie Universelle, T. 14. Note sur la decouverte de l'Amerique.

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chosen from among men for the accomplishment of its high purpose. He read, as he supposed, his contemplated discovery foretold in holy writ, and shadowed forth darkly in the mystic revelations of the prophets. The ends of the earth were to be brought together, and all nations and tongues and languages united under the banners of the Redeemer. This was to be the triumphant consummation of his enterprize, bringing the remote and unknown regions of the earth into communion with Christian Europe; carrying the light of the true faith into benighted and pagan lands, and gathering their countless nations under the holy dominion of the church.

The enthusiastic nature of his conceptions gave an elevation to his spirit, and a dignity and loftiness to his whole demeanour. He conferred with sovereigns almost with a feeling of equality. His views were princely and unbounded; his proposed discovery was of empires; his conditions were proportionally magnificent; nor would he ever, even after long delays, repeated disappointments, and under the pressure of actual penury, abate what appeared to be extravagant demands for a mere possible discovery.

Those who could not conceive how an ardent and comprehensive genius could arrive by presumptive evidence at so firm a conviction, sought for other modes of accounting for it. When the glorious result had established the correctness of the opinion of Columbus, attempts were made to prove that he had previous information of the lands which he pretended to discover. Among these was an idle tale of a tempest-tost pilot, said to have died in his house, bequeathing him written accounts of an unknown land in the west, upon which he had been driven by adverse winds. This story, according to Fernando Columbus, had no other foundation than one of the popular tales about the shadowy island of

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St. Brandan, which a Portuguese captain, returning from Guinea, fancied he had beheld beyond Madeira. It circulated for a time in idle rumour, altered and shaped to suit their purpose, by such as sought to tarnish the glory of Columbus. At length it found its way into print, and has been echoed by various historians, varying with every narration, and full of contradictions and improbabilities*.

An assertion has also been made, that Columbus was preceded in his discoveries by Martin Behem, a contemporary cosmographer, who, it was said, had landed accidentally on the coast of South America, in the course of an African expedition, and that it was with the assistance of a map or globe projected by Behem, on which was laid down the newly discovered country, that Columbus made his voyage. This rumour originated in an absurd misconstruction of a Latin manuscript, and was unsupported by any documents; yet it has had its circulation, and has even been revived not many years since, with more zeal than discretion, but is now completely refuted and put to rest. The land Behem visited was the coast of Africa beyond the Equator; the globe he projected was finished in 1492, while Columbus was absent on his first voyage. It contains no trace of the new world, and thus furnishes conclusive proof that its existence was yet unknown to Behem†.

There is a certain meddlesome spirit which, in the garb of learned research, goes prying about the traces of history, casting down its monuments, and marring and mutilating its fairest trophies. Care should be taken to vindicate great names from such pernicious erudition. It defeats one of the

* See Illustrations, article, "Rumour concerning the Pilot who died in the house of Columbus."

† See Illustrations, article, "Behem."

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most salutary purposes of history—that of furnishing examples of what human genius and laudable enterprize may accomplish. For this purpose, some pains have been taken in the preceding chapters, to trace the rise and progress of this grand idea in the mind of Columbus: to show that it was the conception of his genius, quickened by the impulse of the age, and aided by those scattered gleams of knowledge which fell ineffectually upon ordinary minds.

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CHAPTER VI.

CORRESPONDENCE OF COLUMBUS WITH PAULO TOSCANELLI—EVENTS IN PORTUGAL RELATIVE TO DISCOVERIES.

As early as 1474, Columbus had conceived the design of seeking a western route to India, though as yet it lay crude and unmatured in his mind. This appears from the correspondence already mentioned with the learned Paulo Toscanelli, of Florence, which took place in the summer of that year. The letter of Toscanelli is in reply to one from Columbus, and applauds the design which he had expressed of making a voyage to the west. To demonstrate more clearly the facility of arriving at India in that direction he sent him a map, projected partly according to Ptolemy, and partly according to the descriptions of Marco Polo the Venetian. The eastern coast of Asia was depicted in front of the western coasts of Africa and Europe, with a moderate space of ocean between them, in which were placed at convenient distances, Cipango, Antilla, and the other islands*. Columbus was greatly animated by the letter and chart of Toscanelli, who was considered one of the ablest cosmographers of the day. He appears to

* This map, by which Columbus sailed on his first voyage of discovery, Las Casas (Lib. 1, Cap. 12) says he had in his possession at the time of writing his history. It is greatly to be regretted that so interesting a document should be lost; it may yet exist amidst the chaotic lumber of some of the Spanish archives. Few documents, of mere curiosity, would be more precious.

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have procured the work of Marco Polo, which had been translated into various languages, and existed in manuscript in most libraries. This author gives marvellous accounts of the riches of the realms of Cathay and Mangi, (or Mangu) since ascertained to be northern and southern China, on the coast of which, according to the map of Toscanelli, a voyager sailing directly west, would be sure to arrive. He describes in unmeasured terms the power and grandeur of the sovereign of these countries, the great Khan of Tartary; and the splendour and magnitude of his capitals of Cambalu and Quinsai; and the wonders of the island of Cipango, or Zipangri, supposed to be Japan. This island he places opposite Cathay, five hundred leagues in the ocean. He represents it as abounding in gold, precious stones, and other choice objects of commerce, with a monarch whose palace was covered with plates of gold, as in other countries palaces are covered with lead. The narrations of this traveller were by many considered fabulous; but though they are full of splendid exaggerations, they have since been found to be substantially correct. They are thus particularly noted, from the influence they had over the imagination of Columbus. The work of Marco Polo is a key to many parts of his history. In his applications to the various courts, he represented the countries he expected to discover, as those regions of inexhaustible wealth which the Venetian had described. The territories of the Grand Khan were the objects of research in all his voyages; and in his cruisings among the Antilles, he was continually flattering himself with the hopes of arriving at the opulent island of Cipango, and the coasts of Mangi and Cathay*.

* A more particular account of Marco Polo and his writings is given among the Illustrations.

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While the design of attempting the discovery in the west was maturing in the mind of Columbus, he made a voyage to the north of Europe. Of this we have no other memorial than the following passage, extracted by his son from one of his letters. "In the year 1477, in February, I navigated one hundred leagues beyond Thule, the southern part of which is 73 degrees distant from the Equator, and not 63, as some pretend; neither is it situated within the line which includes the west of Ptolemy, but is much more westerly. The English, principally those of Bristol, go with their merchandise to this island, which is as large as England. When I was there the sea was not frozen, and the tides were so great as to rise and fall twenty-six fathom*."

The island thus mentioned as Thule, is generally supposed to have been Iceland, which is far to the west of the Ultima Thule of the ancients, as laid down on the map of Ptolemy.

Nothing more is known of this voyage, in which we discover indications of his ardent and impatient desire to break away from the limits of the old world, and launch into the unknown regions of the ocean.

Several more years elapsed, without any decided effort on the part of Columbus to carry his design into execution. He was too poor to fit out the armament necessary for so important an expedition. Indeed, as he expected to find vast and heathen countries, unsubjected to any lawful power, he considered it an enterprize only to be undertaken in the employ of some sovereign state, which could assume dominion over the territories he might discover, and reward him with dignities and privileges commensurate to his services.

* Hist. del Almirante, C. 4.

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During the latter part of the reign of Alphonso of Portugal, there was too little ardour in the cause of discovery, to make it probable that a proposition of the kind would be listened to. The monarch was too much engrossed with the wars with Spain, for the succession of the Princess Juana to the crown of Castile, to engage in peaceful enterprizes of an expensive nature. The public mind also was not prepared for so perilous an undertaking. Notwithstanding the many voyages which had been made to the coast of Africa, and the adjacent islands, and that the compass had been introduced into more general use, navigation was still shackled with impediments, and rarely ventured far out of sight of land. Discovery advanced slowly along the coasts of Africa, and the mariners feared to cruise far into the southern hemisphere, with the stars of which they were totally unacquainted. To such men the project of a voyage directly westward, into the midst of that boundless waste, to seek some visionary land, appeared as extravagant, as it would at the present day, to launch forth in a balloon into the regions of space, in quest of some distant star.

The time, however, was at hand that was to extend the powers of navigation. The era was propitious to the quick advancement of knowledge. The recent invention of the art of printing enabled men to communicate rapidly and extensively their ideas and discoveries. It drew forth learning from libraries and convents, and brought it familiarly to the reading desk of the student. Tracts of information, which before had existed only in costly manuscripts, carefully treasured up, and kept out of the reach of the indigent scholar, and obscure artist, were now in every hand. There was thenceforth to be no retrogression in knowledge, nor any pause in its career. Every step in advance was immediately, and simultaneously, and widely promulgated, recorded

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in a thousand forms, and fixed for ever. There could never again be a dark age. Nations might shut their eyes to the light, and sit in wilful darkness, but they could not trample it out. It would still shine on; dispensed to happier parts of the world, by the diffusive powers of the press.

At this juncture, a monarch ascended the throne of Portugal, of different ambition from Alphonso. John II. had imbibed the passion for discovery from his grand uncle, Prince Henry, and with his reign all its activity revived. His first care was to build a fort at St. George de la Mina, on the coast of Guinea, to protect the trade carried on in that neighbourhood for gold dust, ivory and slaves.

The African discoveries had conferred great glory upon Portugal, but as yet they had produced more expense than profit. The accomplishment of the route to India, however, it was expected would repay all their cost and toil, and open a source of incalculable wealth to the nation. The project of Prince Henry, which had now been tardily prosecuted for half a century, had excited an eager curiosity about the remote parts of Asia, and had revived all the accounts, true and fabulous, of travellers.

Beside the marvellous work of Marco Polo, already mentioned, there was the narrative of Rabbi Benjamin ben Jonah of Tudela, a celebrated Spanish Jew, who had set out from Saragossa in 1173, to visit the scattered remnants of the Hebrew tribes, wherever dispersed over the face of the earth. Wandering with unwearied zeal, on this pious errand, over most parts of the known world, he penetrated into China, and passed from thence into the southern islands of Asia*.

* Bergeron, Voyages en Asie, Tom. 1. The work of Benjamin of Tudela, originally written in Hebrew, was so much in repute, that the translation went through at least sixteen editions. Andres Hist. B. Let. L. 3. C. 6.

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There were also the narratives of Carpen and Ascelin; two friars despatched, the one in 1246, the other in 1247, by Pope Innocent IV. as apostolic ambassadors, for the purpose of converting the Grand Khan of Tartary; and the journal of William Rubruquis, (or Ruysbrook,) a celebrated cordelier, sent on a similar errand in 1253, by Lewis IX. of France, then on his unfortunate crusade into Palestine. These pious but chimerical missions had proved abortive; but the curious narrations of them which remained, when thus revived in the fifteenth century, served to inflame the public curiosity respecting the remote parts of Asia.

In these narrations we first find mention made of the renowned Prester John, an imaginary Christian king, said to hold sway in a remote part of the east; who was long an object of curiosity and research, but whose kingdom seemed to shift its situation in the tale of every traveller, and to vanish from the search, as effectually as the unsubstantial island of St. Brandan. All the fables and dreamy speculations concerning this shadowy potentate, and his oriental realm, were again put in circulation. It was fancied that traces of his empire were discovered in the interior of Africa, to the east of Benin, where there was a powerful prince, who used a cross among his insignia of royalty. John II. partook largely of the popular excitement produced by these narrations. In the early part of his reign he actually sent visionary missions in quest of Prester John, to visit whose dominions became the romantic desire of many a religious enthusiast. The magnificent idea he had formed of the remote parts of the east, made him extremely anxious that the splendid project of Prince Henry should be realized, and that the Portuguese flag should penetrate to the Indian seas. Impatient of the slowness with which his discoverers advanced along the coast of Africa, and of the impediments which

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every cape and promontory presented to nautical enterprize, he called in the aid of science, to devise some means by which greater scope and certainty might be given to navigation. His two physicians, Roderigo and Joseph, the latter a Jew, the most able astronomers and cosmographers of his kingdom, together with the celebrated Martin Behem, entered into a learned consultation on the subject. The result of their conferences and labours was the application of the astrolabe to navigation, enabling the seaman, by the altitude of the sun, to ascertain his distance from the Equator*. This instrument has since been improved and modified into the modern quadrant, of which, even at its first introduction, it possessed all the essential advantages. It is impossible to describe the effect produced upon navigation by this invention. It cast it loose at once from its long bondage to the land, and set it free to rove the deep. Science had thus prepared guides for discovery across the trackless ocean. Instead of coasting the shores like the ancient navigator, and, when driven from the land, groping his way back, in doubt and apprehension, by the uncertain guidance of the stars, the modern mariner might adventure boldly into unknown seas, confident of being able to retrace his course, by means of the compass and the astrolabe, should he find no distant port.

* Barros, Asia, Decad 1. L. 4. C. 2. Maffei, Lib. 1, p. 6, 7.

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CHAPTER VII.

PROPOSITIONS OF COLUMBUS TO THE COURT OF PORTUGAL.

THE application of the astrolabe to navigation was one of those timely events, which seem to have something providential in them. It was the one thing wanting to facilitate an intercourse across the deep, and it divested the enterprize of Columbus of that hazardous character which was so great an obstacle to its accomplishment. It was immediately after this event that he proposed his voyage of discovery to the crown of Portugal.

This is his first proposition of which we have any clear and indisputable record, although it has been strongly asserted that he made one at an earlier period to his native country, Genoa. The court of Portugal had shown extraordinary liberality in rewarding nautical enterprize. Most of those who had made discoveries in her service had been appointed to the government of the islands and countries which they had discovered, although many of them were foreigners by birth. Encouraged by this liberality, and by the anxiety evinced by king John II. to accomplish a passage by sea to India, Columbus obtained an audience of that monarch. He proposed, in case the king would furnish him with ships and men, to undertake a shorter and more direct route to India, than that which they were seeking. His plan was to strike directly to the west, across the Atlan-

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tic. He then unfolded his hypotheses with respect to the extent of Asia, describing also the immense riches of the island of Cipango, the first land at which he expected to arrive. Of this audience we have two accounts, written in somewhat of an opposite spirit; one by his son Fernando, the other by Joam de Barros, the Portuguese historiographer. It is curious to notice the different views taken of the same transaction by the enthusiastic son, and by the cool, perhaps prejudiced historian.

The king, according to Fernando, listened to his father with great attention, but was discouraged from engaging in any new scheme of the kind, by the cost and trouble already sustained, in exploring the route by the African coast, which as yet remained unaccomplished. His father, however, supported his proposition by such excellent reasons, that the king was induced to give his consent. The only difficulty that remained was the terms; for Columbus, being a man of lofty and noble sentiments, demanded high and honourable titles and rewards; to the end, says Fernando, that he might leave behind him a name and family worthy of his deeds and merits*.

Barros, on the other hand, attributes the seeming acquiescence of the king, merely to the importunities of Columbus. He considered him, says the historian, a vainglorious man, fond of displaying his abilities, and given to fantastic fancies, such as that respecting the island of Cipango†. But in fact, this idea of Columbus being vain was taken up by the Portuguese writers in after years; and as to the island of Cipango, it was far from being considered chimercial by the king, who, as has been shown by his mission in search

* Hist. del Almirante, Cap. 10.

† Barros, Asia, decad. 1. l. 3. c. 2.

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of Prester John, was a ready believer in these travellers' tales concerning the east. The reasoning of Columbus must have had its weight on the mind of the monarch, since it is certain that he referred the proposition to a learned junto, charged with all matters relating to maritime discovery.

This junto was composed of the two able cosmographers, masters Rodrigo and Joseph, and the king's confessor Diego Ortez de Cazadilla, Bishop of Ceuta, a man greatly reputed for his learning, a Castilian by birth, and generally called Cazadilla, from the name of his native place. This scientific body treated the project as extravagant and visionary.

Still the king does not appear to have been satisfied. According to his historian Vasconcelez*, he convoked his council, composed of the prelates and persons of the greatest learning in the kingdom, and asked their advice, whether to adopt this new route of discovery, or to pursue that which they had already opened. The proposition of Columbus was generally condemned by the council, and in fact a spirit seemed to be awakening among them hostile to all discovery.

It may not be deemed superfluous to notice briefly the discussion of the council on this great question. Vasconcelez reports a speech of the Bishop of Ceuta, in which he not only objected to the proposed enterprize, as destitute of reason, but even discountenanced any further prosecution of the African discoveries. They tended, he said, to distract the attention, drain the resources, and divide the power of the nation; already too much weakened by recent war and pestilence. While their forces were thus scattered abroad on remote and unprofitable expeditions, they exposed themselves to attack from their active enemy the king of Castile.

* Vasconcelez, Vida del Rey D. Juan II. l. 4.

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The greatness of monarchs, he observed, did not arise so much from the extent of their dominions, as from the wisdom and ability with which they governed. In the Portuguese nation, it would be madness to launch into enterprizes without first considering them in connexion with its means. The king had already sufficient undertakings in hand of certain advantage without engaging in others of a wild, chimerical nature. If he wished employment for the active valour of the nation, the war in which he was engaged against the Moors of Barbary was sufficient, wherein his triumphs were of solid advantage, tending to cripple and enfeeble those neighbouring foes, who had proved themselves so dangerous when possessed of power.

This cool and cautious speech of the Bishop of Ceuta, directed against those enterprizes which were the glory of the Portuguese, touched the national pride of Don Pedro de Meneses, Count of Villa Real, and drew from him a lofty and patriotic reply. It has been said by a historian that this reply was in support of the proposition of Columbus; but that does not clearly appear. He may have treated the proposal with respect, but his eloquence was employed for those enterprizes in which the Portuguese were already engaged.

"Portugal," he observed, "was not in its infancy, nor were its princes so poor as to lack means to engage in discoveries. Even granting that those proposed by Columbus were conjectural, why should they abandon those commenced by their late Prince Henry, on such solid foundations, and prosecuted with such happy prospects? Crowns," he observed, "enriched themselves by commerce, fortified themselves by alliance, and acquired empires by conquest. The views of a nation could not always be the same; they extended with its opulence and prosperity. Portugal was at peace with all the princes of Europe. It had nothing to fear

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from engaging in an extensive enterprize. It would be the greatest laud for Portuguese valour to penetrate into the secrets and horrors of the ocean sea, so formidable to the other nations of the world. Thus occupied, it would escape the idleness engendered in a long interval of peace, that source of vice, that silent file, which little by little, wore away the strength and valour of a nation. It was an affront," he added, "to the Portuguese name to menace it with imaginary perils, when it had proved itself so intrepid in encountering the most certain and tremendous. Great souls were born for great enterprizes. He wondered much that a prelate, so religious as the Bishop of Ceuta, should oppose this undertaking; the ultimate object of which was to augment the Catholic faith, and spread it from pole to pole; reflecting glory on the Portuguese nation, and yielding empire and lasting fame to its princes." He concluded by declaring, that "although a soldier, he dared to prognosticate with a voice and spirit as if from heaven, to whatever prince should achieve this enterprize, more happy success and durable renown, than had ever been obtained by sovereign the most valorous and fortunate*." Such was the warm and generous speech of the Count of Villa Real, in favour of the African expeditions. It would have been fortunate for Portugal had his eloquence been exerted in favour of Columbus; for it is said to have been received with acclamations, to have overpowered the reasonings of the cold spirited Cazadilla, and to have inspired the king and council with renewed ardour for the attempt to circumnavigate the extremity of Africa, which they afterwards completed with such brilliant success.

* Vasconcelez, L. 4. La Clede, Hist. Portugal, L. 13. T. 3.

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CHAPTER VIII.

DEPARTURE OF COLUMBUS FROM PORTUGAL, AND APPLICATION TO OTHER COURTS.

JOHN II. of Portugal, is generally represented as a wise and magnanimous prince, and as one little apt to be ruled by his counsellors. In this memorable negociation with Columbus, however, he appears to have been wanting in his usual magnanimity, and to have listened to crafty council, opposite at all times to true policy, and in this instance productive of much mortification and regret. Certain of his counsellors, seeing that the monarch was dissatisfied with their decision, and still retained a lurking inclination for the enterprize, suggested a stratagem by which all its advantages might be secured, without committing the dignity of the crown by entering into formal negociations about what might prove a mere chimera. It was proposed that Columbus should be kept in suspense, while a vessel should be secretly despatched in the direction he had pointed out, to ascertain whether there were any foundation for his theory.

This perfidious advice is attributed to Cazadilla, Bishop of Ceuta, and agrees with the narrow policy which would have persuaded king John to abandon the splendid track of his African discoveries. The king in evil hour departed from his usual justice and generosity, and had the weakness to permit the stratagem. Columbus was required to furnish

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a detailed plan of his proposed voyage, with the charts or other documents according to which he intended to shape his course, that they might be examined by the council. He readily complied. A caravel was then dispatched, with the ostensible pretext of carrying provisions to the Cape de Verd Islands, but with private instructions to pursue the route designated in the papers of Columbus. Departing from those islands, the caravel stood westward for several days. The weather grew stormy, and the pilots having no zeal to stimulate them, and seeing nothing but an immeasurable waste of wild tumbling waves still extending before them, lost all courage to proceed. They put back to the Cape de Verd islands, and thence to Lisbon, excusing their own want of resolution, by ridiculing the project of Columbus as extravagant and irrational*.

This unworthy attempt to defraud him of his enterprize aroused the indignation of Columbus. King John, it is said, would have renewed the negociation, but he resolutely declined. His wife had been for some time dead: the domestic tie which had bound him to Portugal was broken; he determined, therefore, to abandon a country where he had been treated with so little faith, and to seek patronage elsewhere.

Towards the end of 1484, he departed secretly from Lisbon, taking with him his son Diego. The reason assigned for leaving the kingdom thus privately, is that he feared being prevented by the king; another reason appears to have arisen from his poverty. While engrossed by those speculations which were to produce such benefit to mankind, his affairs had run to ruin. It would seem that he was even in

* Hist. del Almirante, Cap. 8. Herrera, Dec. 1, L. 1, c. 7.

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danger of being arrested for debt. A letter lately discovered, which was written to Columbus some years afterwards by the king of Portugal, inviting his return, ensures him against any arrest on account of any process, civil or criminal, which might be pending against him*.

An interval now occurs of about a year, during which the movements of Columbus are involved in uncertainty. A modern Spanish historian of great investigation and accuracy is of opinion that he departed immediately for Genoa, where he affirms that he certainly was in 1485, when he repeated in person a proposition of his enterprize which he had formerly made to the government by letter, but that he met with a contemptuous refusal*.

The Republic of Genoa, in fact, was not in a situation favourable to such an undertaking. She was languishing under a long decline and embarrassed by a foreign war. Caffa, her great deposit in the Crimea, had recently fallen into the hands of the Turks, and her flag was on the point of being driven from the Archipelago. Her spirit was broken with her fortunes; for with nations, as with individuals, enterprize is the child of prosperity, and is apt to languish in evil days, when there is most need of its exertion. Thus Genoa, it would appear, disheartened by her reverses, shut her ears to a proposition which would have elevated her to tenfold splendour, and might have perpetuated the golden wand of commerce in the grasp of Italy.

From Genoa it is suggested that Columbus carried his proposal to Venice. No documents exist to support this opinion. An Italian writer of merit and research says, there

* Navarrete, Collec. T. 2, Doc. III.

† Munoz, Hist. N. Mundo, L. 2.

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is an old tradition floating in Venice to that effect. A distinguished magistrate of that city, he adds, assured him that he had formerly seen mention in the public archives of this offer of Columbus, and of its being declined in consequence of the critical state of national affairs*. The long and inveterate wars, however, which had prevailed between Venice and his native state render this application rather improbable. Different authors agree that about this time he visited his aged father, made some arrangements for his comfort, and having performed the duties of a pious son, departed once more to try his fortunes in foreign courts†.

It will be observed that several of the foregoing circumstances, by which an attempt has been made to account for the interval between the departure of Columbus from Portugal, and the first notice we have of him in Spain, are conjectural. Such, however, is the embarrassment in developing this obscure part of his history, before the splendour of his discovery had shed a light about his path. All that can be done is to grope along, from one isolated fact to another. That during this interval he struggled hard with poverty,

* Bossi, Document No. XIV.

† It has generally been asserted that about this time Columbus sent his brother Bartholomew to England with proposals to king Henry VII, where he remained several years. Las Casas, however, intimates that, from letters and writings of Bartholomew in his possession, the latter accompanied Bartholomew Diaz in his voyage from Lisbon, in 1486, along the coast of Africa, in the course of which he discovered the Cape of Good Hope, from whence he returned in December, 1487. The application to King Henry was not made until 1488, as would appear by the inscription on a map which Bartholomew presented to that king.—Las Casas, Hist. Ind. Lib. 1, Cap. 7.

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would appear from the destitute situation in which we first meet with him in Spain; nor is it one of the least extraordinary circumstances in his eventful life, that he had in a manner to beg his way from court to court, to offer to princes the discovery of a world.

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LIFE AND VOYAGES

OF

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS.

BOOK II.

CHAPTER I.

FIRST ARRIVAL OF COLUMBUS IN SPAIN.

It is interesting to notice the first arrival of Columbus in that country, which was to become the scene of his glory, and which he was to render so powerful and illustrious by his discoveries. In this we meet with one of those striking and instructive contrasts which occur in his eventful history. The first trace we have of him in Spain, is in the testimony furnished a few years after his death, in the celebrated law-suit between his son Don Diego and the crown, by Garcia Fernandez, a physician resident in the little seaport of Palos de Maguez, in Andalusia. About half a league from that town stood, and stands at the present day, an ancient convent of Franciscan friars, dedicated to Santa Maria de Rabida. According to the testimony of the Physician, a stranger, on foot, accompanied by a small boy, stopped one day at the gate of the convent, and asked of the porter a

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little bread and water for his child. While receiving this humble refreshment, the prior of the convent, Friar Juan Perez de Marchena, happening to pass by, was struck with the appearance of the stranger, and observing from his air and accent that he was a foreigner, entered into conversation with him, and soon learnt the particulars of his story. That stranger was Columbus, accompanied by his young son Diego. Where he had come from does not clearly appear*; that he was in destitute circumstances is evident from the mode of his wayfaring: he was on his way to the neighbouring town of Huelon, to seek his brother-in-law, who had married a sister of his deceased wife†.

The prior was a man of extensive information. His attention had been turned in some measure to geographical and nautical science, probably from his vicinity to Palos, the inhabitants of which were among the most enterprising na-

* "Lo dicho Almirante Colon veniendo á la Rabida, que es un monastério de frailes en esta villa el qual demandó á la porteria que le diesen para aquel niñico, que era niño, pan i agua que bebiese." The testimony of Garcia Fernandez exists in manuscript among the multifarious writings of the Pleito or law-suit, which are preserved at Seville. I have made use of an authenticated extract, copied for the late historian, Juan Baut. Muñoz. There is a little obscurity in some part of the evidence of Garcia Fernandez. It was given many years after the event. He states Columbus as coming with his infant son from the Castilian court, but he evidently confounds two visits which Columbus made to the convent of La Rabida into one. In making use of his testimony, that confusion has been corrected by comparing it with other well ascertained facts.

† Probably Pedro Correa, already mentioned, from whom he had received information of signs of land in the west, observed near Puerto Santo.

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vigators of Spain, and made frequent voyages to the recently discovered islands and countries on the African coast. He was greatly interested by the conversation of Columbus, and struck with the grandeur of his views. It was a remarkable occurrence in the monotonous life of the cloister, to have a man of such singular character, intent on so extraordinary an enterprize, applying for bread and water at the gate of his convent. He detained him as his guest, and, diffident of his own judgment, sent for a scientific friend to converse with him. That friend was Garcia Fernandez, the physician of Palos, the same who furnishes this interesting testimony. Fernandez was equally struck with the appearance and conversation of the stranger. Several conferences took place at the old convent, and the project of Columbus was treated with a deference in the quiet cloisters of La Rabida, which it had in vain sought amidst the bustle and pretension of court sages and philosophers. Hints too were gathered among the veteran mariners of Palos, which seemed to corroborate his theory. One Pedro de Velasco, an old and experienced pilot of the place, affirmed that nearly thirty years before, in the course of a voyage, he was carried by stress of weather so far to the northwest, that Cape Clear in Ireland lay to the east of him. Here, though there was a strong wind blowing from the west, the sea was perfectly smooth; a remarkable circumstance, which he supposed to be produced by land lying in that direction. It being late in August, however, he was fearful of the approach of winter, and did not venture to proceed on the discovery*.

Fray Juan Perez possessed that hearty zeal in friendship, which carries good wishes into good deeds. Being fully persuaded that the proposed enterprize would be of the ut-

* Hist. del Almirante, Cap. 8.

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most importance to the country, he offered to give Columbus a favourable introduction to court, and he advised him by all means to repair thither, and make his propositions to the Spanish sovereigns. Juan Perez was on intimate terms with Fernando de Talavera, prior of the monastery of Prado and confessor to the queen, a man high in royal confidence, and possessing great weight in public affairs*. To him he gave Columbus a letter, strongly recommending himself and his enterprize to the patronage of Talavera, and requesting his friendly intercession with the king and queen. As the influence of the church was paramount in the court of Castile, and as Talavera, from his situation as confessor, had the most direct and confidential communication with the queen, every thing was expected from his mediation. In the meantime Fray Juan Perez took charge of the youthful son of Columbus, to maintain and educate him at his convent.

The zeal of this worthy man, thus early enkindled, never cooled; and many years afterwards, in the day of his success, Columbus looks back, through the brilliant crowd of courtiers, prelates and philosophers, who claimed the honour of having patronized his enterprize, and points to this modest friar, as one who had been most effectually its friend. He remained in the convent until the spring of 1486, when the court arrived in the ancient city of Cordova, where the sovereigns intended to assemble their troops, and make preparations for a spring campaign against the Moorish kingdom of Granada. Elated then with fresh hopes, and confident of a speedy audience, on the strength of the letter to Fernando de Talavera, Columbus bade farewell to the worthy Prior of La Rabida, leaving with him his child, and set out, full of spirits, for the court of Castile.

* Selinas Cron. Franciscana de Peru. L. 1, C. 14. Malendez Tesoros Verdaderos de las Indias, L. 1, C. 1.

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CHAPTER II.

CHARACTERS OF FERDINAND AND ISABELLA.

1486. THE time when Columbus first sought his fortunes in Spain was at one of the most brilliant periods of the Spanish monarchy. The union of the kingdoms of Arragon and Castile, by the marriage of Ferdinand and Isabella, had consolidated the Christian power in the peninsula, and put an end to those internal feuds, which had so long distracted the country, and ensured the domination of the Mussulmans. The whole force of united Spain was now exerted in the chivalrous enterprize of the Moorish conquest. The Moors, who had once spread over the whole country like an inundation, were now dammed up within the mountain boundaries of the kingdom of Granada. The victorious armies of Ferdinand and Isabella were continually advancing, and pressing this fierce people within narrower limits. Under these sovereigns, the various petty kingdoms of Spain began to feel and act as one nation, and to rise to eminence in arts as well as arms. Ferdinand and Isabella, it has been remarked, lived together, not like man and wife whose estates are common under the orders of the husband; but like two monarchs, strictly allied*. They had separate claims to sovereignty, in virtue of their respective kingdoms; they had separate councils, and were often distant from each other in different parts of their empire, each exercising the royal authority; yet they were so happily united by common views,

* Voltaire, Essai sur les mœurs, &c.

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common interests, and a great deference for each other, that this double administration never prevented a unity of purpose and of action. All acts of sovereignty were executed in both their names; all public writings were subscribed with both their signatures; their likenesses were stamped together on the public coin; and the royal seal displayed the united arms of Castile and Arragon.

Ferdinand was of the middle stature, well proportioned, and hardy and active from athletic exercise. His carriage was free, erect, and majestic. He had a clear serene forehead, which appeared more lofty from his head being partly bald. His eyebrows were large and parted, and like his hair, of a bright chestnut. His eyes were clear and animated, his complexion was somewhat ruddy, and scorched by the toils of war. His mouth moderate well formed and gracious in its expression; his teeth white, though small and irregular. His voice sharp; his speech quick and fluent. His genius was clear and comprehensive, his judgment grave and certain. He was simple in dress and diet, equable in his temper, devout in his religion, and so indefatigable in business, that it was said he seemed to repose himself by working. He was a great observer and judge of men, and unparalleled in the science of the cabinet. Such is the picture given of him by the Spanish historians of his time. It has been added, however, that he had more of bigotry than religion; that his ambition was craving rather than magnanimous; that he made war less like a paladin than a prince, less for glory than for mere dominion; and that his policy was cold, selfish, and artful. He was called the wise and prudent in Spain, in Italy the pious, in France and England the ambitious and perfidious*.

* Voltaire, Essai sur les mœurs, Ch. XIV.

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While giving his picture, it may not be deemed impertinent to sketch the fortunes of a monarch, whose policy had such an effect upon the history of Columbus, and the destinies of the new world. Success attended all his measures. Though a younger son, he had ascended the throne of Arragon by inheritance; Castile he obtained by marriage; Granada and Naples by conquest; and he seized upon Navarre as appertaining to any body, when Pope Julius II. excommunicated its sovereigns, Juan and Catalina, and gave their throne to the first occupant*. He sent his forces into Africa, and subjugated, or reduced to vassalage, Tunis and Tripoli, and Algiers, and most of the Barbary powers. A new world was also given to him, without cost, by the discoveries of Columbus; for the expense of the enterprize was borne exclusively by his consort Isabella. He had three objects at heart from the commencement of his reign, which he pursued with bigotted and persecuting zeal; the conquest of the Moors, the expulsion of the Jews, and the establishment of the Inquisition in his dominions. He accomplished them all, and was rewarded by Pope Innocent VIII. with the appellation of Most Catholic Majesty, a title which his successors have tenaciously retained.

Contemporary writers have been enthusiastic in their descriptions of Isabella, but time has sanctioned their eulogies; she is one of the purest and most beautiful characters on the pages of history. She was well formed, of the middle size, with great dignity and gracefulness of deportment, and a mingled gravity and sweetness of demeanour. Her complexion was fair; her hair auburn, inclining to red; her eyes

* Pedro Salazar de Mendoza, Monarq. de Esp. Lib. 3, Cap. 5, (Madrid, 1770, tom. 1. p. 402.) Gonzalo de Illescas. Hist. Pontif. Lib. 6. Cap. 23, § 3.

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were of a clear blue, with a benign expression; and there was a singular modesty in her countenance, gracing as it did a wonderful firmness of purpose, and earnestness of spirit. Though strongly attached to her husband, and studious of his fame, yet she always maintained her distinct rights as an allied prince. She exceeded him in beauty, in personal dignity, in acuteness of genius, and in grandeur of soul*. Combining the active and resolute qualities of man, with the softer charities of woman, she mingled in the warlike councils of her husband; engaged personally in his enterprises†; and in some instances surpassed him in the firmness and intrepidity of her measures; while, being inspired with a truer idea of glory, she infused a more lofty and generous temper into his subtle and calculating policy.

It is in the civil history of their reign, however, that the character of Isabella shines most illustrious. Her fostering and maternal care was continually directed to reform the laws, and heal the ills engendered by a long course of internal wars. She loved her people, and while diligently seeking their good, she mitigated as much as possible the harsh measures of her husband, directed to the same end, but inflamed by a mistaken zeal. Thus, though almost bigotted in her piety, and perhaps too much under the influence of ghostly advisers, still she was hostile to every measure calculated to advance religion at the expense of humanity. She strenuously opposed the expulsion of the Jews, and the establishment of the Inquisition, though unfortunately for Spain, her repugnance was slowly vanquished by her con-

* Garibay, Hist. de Espagna, T. 11, L. XVIII. C. 1.

† Several suits of armour *cap-a-pie*, worn by Isabella, and still preserved in the royal arsenal at Madrid, show that she was exposed to personal danger in her campaigns.

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fessors. She was always an advocate for clemency to the Moors, although she was the soul of the war against Granada. She considered that war essential to protect the Christian faith, and to relieve her subjects from fierce and formidable enemies. While all her public thoughts and acts were princely and august, her private habits were simple, frugal and unostentatious. In the intervals of state business, she assembled round her the ablest men in literature and science, and directed herself by their counsels, in promoting letters and arts. Through her patronage, Salamanca rose to that height which it assumed among the learned institutions of the age. She promoted the distribution of honours and rewards for the promulgation of knowledge, she fostered the art of printing, recently invented, and encouraged the establishment of presses in every part of the kingdom: books were admitted free of all duty, and more, we are told, were printed in Spain, at that early period of the art, than in the present literary age*.

It is wonderful, how much the destinies of countries depend at times upon the virtues of individuals, and how it is given to great spirits, by combining, exciting, and directing the latent powers of a nation, to stamp it, as it were, with their own greatness. Such beings realize the idea of guardian angels, appointed by heaven to watch over the destinies of empires. Such had been prince Henry for the kingdom of Portugal, and such was now for Spain the illustrious Isabella.

* Elogio de la Reina Catolica: por Diego Clemencin. Madrid, 1821.

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CHAPTER III.

PROPOSITIONS OF COLUMBUS TO THE COURT OF CASTILE.

COLUMBUS arrived at Cordova early in 1486. He was disappointed, however, in his hopes of immediate patronage: he found it impossible to obtain even a hearing. Fernando de Talavera, prior of Prado, instead of being secured to his interests by the recommendation of Juan Perez de Marchena, looked upon his plan as extravagant and impossible*. Indeed, the slender interest on which he founded his hopes of success at court, and the humble garb in which his poverty obliged him to appear, formed a preposterous contrast in the eyes of the courtiers with the magnificence of his speculations. "Because he was a stranger," says Oviedo, "and went but in simple apparel, nor otherwise credited than by the letter of a gray friar, they believed him not, neither gave ear to his words, whereby he was greatly tormented in his imagination†." The time consumed by Columbus in lingering attendance on the Spanish court, has occasioned much animadversion: it is but candid, however, to take into consideration the situation of the sovereigns at the time, which was certainly most unpropitious to his suit. The war with Granada was then in full activity; and the king and queen

* Salazar, Cron. del Gran Cardinal, L. 1, C. 62.

† Oviedo, L. 2, C. 5. English translation.

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engaged in most of the campaigns in person. When Columbus arrived at Cordova, the court was like a military camp. The rival Moorish kings of Granada, Muley Boabdil the uncle, called also El Zagal, and Mahomet Boabdil the nephew, generally termed El Chiquito, had just formed a coalition, and their league called for prompt and vigorous measures.

Early in the spring the king marched off to lay siege to the Moorish city of Loxa: and though the queen remained at Cordova, she was continually employed in forwarding troops and supplies to the army, and at the same time attending to the multiplied exigencies of civil government. On the 12th of June she repaired to the camp, then engaged in the siege of Moclin, and both sovereigns remained for some time in the Vega of Granada, prosecuting the war with unremitting vigour. They had barely returned to Cordova to celebrate their victories by public rejoicings, when they were obliged to set out for Galicia, to suppress a rebellion of the Count of Lemos. From thence they repaired to Salamanca for the winter*.

This brief picture of the occupation, and the bustling life, of the Spanish sovereigns, during the first year after the arrival of Columbus, may give an idea of their reign throughout the term of his negociation, which precisely coincided with their war with the Moors. The court was continually shifting from place to place, according to the exigency of the moment. The sovereigns were either on journeys or in the field; and when they had an interval of repose from the rugged toils of war, they had a thousand claims on their time and attention, from the modifications and reforms which they were enforcing throughout their dominions.

* Pulgar, Zurita, Garibay, &c.

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Amidst such pressing concerns of domestic and immediate importance, and so exhausting to the treasury, it is not to be wondered at, that the monarchs should find little time to attend to a scheme of foreign discovery, which required much consideration, called for great expense, and was generally esteemed the wild dream of an enthusiast. It is a question even whether for some time his application reached their ears. Fernando de Talavera, who was to have been his organ of communication, was unfriendly to his cause, and was himself taken up with military concerns, and absent with the court in its campaigns, being one of the clerical advisers, who surrounded the queen in this, as it was termed, holy war.

During the summer and autumn of 1486, the period of the campaign and transactions just alluded to, Columbus remained at Cordova. He continued to support himself, it is believed, by designing maps and charts*, and trusted to time and exertion to make him converts and friends of influence. He had to contend against the ridicule of the light and the supercilious, one of the greatest obstacles which modest merit can encounter in a court: he had a sanguine temperament, however, and a fund of enthusiasm, which bore him up against every trial. There was a dignity likewise in his manners, and an earnest sincerity in his conversation, which gradually gained him friends. One of the most effectual was Alonzo de Quintanilla, comptroller of the finances of Castile, who it is said received him into his house, and became a warm advocate of his theory†. He made also the acquaintance of Antonio Geraldini, nuncio from the Pope, and his brother, Alexander Geraldini, preceptor to the younger children of Ferdinand and Isabella, both of whom

* Cura de los Palacios, C. 118.

† Salazar, Cron. G. Cardinal, L. 1, C. 62.

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entered warmly into his views*. By the aid of these friends, he was introduced to the celebrated Pedro Gonzalez de Mendoza, archbishop of Toledo, and grand cardinal of Spain†.

This was the most important personage about court. The king and queen had him always at their side, in peace and war. He accompanied them in their campaigns, and they never took any measure of consequence without consulting him. He was facetiously called by Peter Martyr, "the third king of Spain." He was a man of a clear understanding, eloquent, judicious, and of great quickness and capacity in business. Simple yet curiously nice in his apparel; lofty and venerable, yet gracious and gentle in his deportment. Though an elegant scholar, the grand cardinal, like many learned men of his day, was but little skilled in cosmography, and was tenacious in his religious scruples. When the theory of Columbus was first mentioned to him, it struck him as involving heterodox opinions, incompatible with the form of the earth, as described in the sacred scriptures. Further explanations had their force with a man of his quick apprehension and sound sense. He perceived that at any rate there could be nothing irreligious in attempting to extend the bounds of human knowledge, and to ascertain the works of creation. His scruples once removed, he gave Columbus a courteous and attentive hearing.

The latter, knowing the importance of his auditor, exerted himself to produce conviction. The clear headed cardinal listened with profound attention. He saw the grandeur of the conception, and felt the force of the arguments. He was pleased likewise with the noble and earnest manner of Columbus, and became at once a firm and serviceable friend‡.

* Spotorno, page xlvi. Eng. translation.

† Oviedo, L. 2, C. 4. Salazar, L. 1, C. 62.

‡ Ibid.

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The representations of the grand cardinal procured Columbus an audience from the sovereigns. He appeared before them with modesty yet self-possession, for he felt himself, as he afterwards declared in his letters, an instrument in the hand of heaven to accomplish its grand designs*.

Ferdinand was too keen a judge of men not to appreciate the character of Columbus. He perceived that however soaring might be his imagination, and magnificent his speculations, the scheme had scientific and practical foundation. His ambition was excited by the possibility of discoveries far more important than those which had shed such glory upon Portugal. Still, as usual, he was cool and wary, and determined to take the opinion of the most learned men in the kingdom, and to be guided by their decision. He referred the matter therefore to Fernando de Talavera, the prior of Prado, authorizing him to assemble the most learned astronomers and cosmographers, to hold a conference with Columbus, informing themselves of the grounds on which he founded his proposition; after which they were to consult together and make their report†.

* Letter to the Sovereigns in 1501.

† Hist. del Almirante, C. 11.

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CHAPTER IV.

COLUMBUS BEFORE THE COUNCIL AT SALAMANCA.

THE interesting conference relative to the proposition of Columbus took place in Salamanca, the great seat of learning in Spain. It was held in the Dominican Convent of St. Stephen, in which Columbus was lodged and entertained with great hospitality during the course of the examination*.

Religion and science were at that time, and more especially in that country, closely associated. The treasures of learning were immured in monasteries, and the professors' chairs were exclusively filled from the cloister. The domination of the clergy extended over the state as well as the church, and posts of honour and influence at court, with the exception of hereditary nobles, were almost entirely confided to ecclesiastics. It was even common to find cardinals and bishops in helm and corslet at the head of armies, for the crosier had been occasionally thrown by for the lance, during the holy war against the Moors. The era was distinguished for the revival of learning, but still more for the prevalence of religious zeal, and Spain surpassed all other countries of Christendom in the fervour of her devotion. The Inquisition had just been established in that kingdom, and every opinion that savoured of heresy made its owner obnoxious to odium and persecution.

* Hist. de Chiapa por Remesel, lib. 2, c. 27.

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Such was the period when a council of clerical sages was convened in the collegiate convent of St. Stephen, to investigate the new theory of Columbus. It was composed of professors of astronomy, geography, mathematics, and the other branches of science, together with various dignitaries of the church, and learned friars. Before this erudite assembly, Columbus presented himself to propound and defend his conclusions. He had been scoffed at as a visionary by the vulgar and the ignorant; but he was convinced that he only required a body of enlightened men to listen dispassionately to his reasonings, to ensure triumphant conviction.

The greater part of this learned junto, it is very probable, came prepossessed against him, as men in place and dignity are apt to be against poor applicants. There is always a proneness to consider a man under examination as a kind of delinquent, or impostor, whose faults and errors are to be detected and exposed. Columbus, too, appeared in a most unfavourable light before a scholastic body: an obscure navigator, member of no learned institution, destitute of all the trappings and circumstances which sometimes give oracular authority to dulness, and depending upon the mere force of natural genius. Some of the junto entertained the popular notion that he was an adventurer, or at best a visionary; and others had that morbid impatience of any innovation upon established doctrine, which is apt to grow upon dull and pedantic men in cloistered life.

What a striking spectacle must the hall of the old convent have presented at this memorable conference! a simple mariner, standing forth in the midst of an imposing array of professors, friars and dignitaries of the church; maintaining his theory with natural eloquence, and as it were, pleading the cause of the new world. We are told that when he began to state the grounds of his belief the friars of St. Ste-

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phen alone paid attention to him*; that convent being more learned in the sciences than the rest of the university. The others appear to have entrenched themselves behind one dogged position; that after so many profound philosophers and cosmographers had been studying the form of the world, and so many able navigators had been sailing about it for several thousand years, it was great presumption in an ordinary man to suppose that there remained such a vast discovery for him to make.

Several of the objections opposed by this learned body have been handed down to us, and have provoked many a sneer at the expense of the University of Salamanca, but they are proofs not so much of the peculiar deficiency of that institution, as of the imperfect state of science at the time, and the manner in which knowledge, though rapidly extending, was still impeded in its progress by monastic bigotry. All subjects were still contemplated through the obscure medium of those ages when the lights of antiquity were trampled out, and faith was left to fill the place of inquiry. Bewildered in a maze of religious controversy, mankind had retraced their steps, and receded from the boundary line of ancient knowledge. Thus, at the very threshold of the discussion, instead of geographical objections, Columbus was assailed with citations from the bible and the testament: the book of Genesis, the psalms of David, the orations of the Prophets, the epistles of the Apostles, and the gospels of the Evangelists. To these were added the expositions of various saints and reverend commentators: St. Chrysostom and St. Augustine, St. Jerome and St. Gregory, St. Basil and St. Ambrose, and Lactantius Firmianus, a redoubted champion of the faith. Doctrinal points were mixed up

* Remesal, Hist. de Chiapa, L. 11, C. 7.

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with philosophical discussions, and a mathematical demonstration was allowed no weight, if it appeared to clash with a text of scripture, or a commentary of one of the fathers. Thus the possibility of antipodes, in the southern hemisphere, an opinion so generally maintained by the wisest of the ancients, as to be pronounced by Pliny the great contest between the learned and the ignorant, became a stumbling block with some of the sages of Salamanca. Several of them stoutly contradicted this fundamental position of Columbus, supporting themselves by quotations from Lactantius and St. Augustine, who were considered in those days as almost evangelical authority*. But, though these writers were men of consummate erudition, and two of the greatest luminaries of what has been called the golden age of ecclesiastical learning, yet their writings were calculated to perpetuate darkness in respect to the sciences.

The passage cited from Lactantius to confute Columbus, is in a strain of gross ridicule, unworthy of so grave a casuist. "Is there any one so foolish," he asks, "as to believe that there are antipodes with their feet opposite to ours; people who walk with their heels upward, and their heads hanging down? That there is a part of the world in which all things are topsyturvy: where the trees grow with their branches downward, and where it rains, hails and snows upward? The idea of the roundness of the earth," he adds, "was the cause of inventing this fable of the antipodes, with their heels in the air; for these philosophers, having once erred, go on in their absurdities, defending one with another."

* The first book printed in Europe contained the Divine Institutions of Lactantius Firmianus, and the book of the City of God, by the divine doctor St. Augustine. Hist. Pontif. L. 6, C. 13.

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More grave objections were advanced on the authority of St. Augustine. He pronounces the doctrine of antipodes incompatible with the historical foundations of our faith; since, to assert that there were inhabited lands on the opposite side of the globe, would be to maintain that there were nations not descended from Adam, it being impossible for them to have passed the intervening ocean. This would be, therefore, to discredit the bible, which expressly declares, that all men are descended from one common parent.

Such were the unlooked-for prejudices which Columbus had to encounter at the very outset of his conference, and which certainly relish more of the convent than the university. To his simplest proposition, the spherical form of the earth, were opposed figurative texts of scripture. They observed that in the Psalms the heavens are said to be extended like a skin*, that is, according to commentators, the curtain or covering of a tent, which among the ancient pastoral nations was formed of the skins of animals; and that St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Hebrews, compares the heaven to a tabernacle, or tent, extended over the earth, which they thence inferred must be flat.

Columbus, who was a devoutly religious man, found that he was in danger of being convicted not merely of error, but of heterodoxy. Others more versed in science admitted the globular form of the earth, and the possibility of an opposite and habitable hemisphere; but they brought up the chimera of the ancients, and maintained that it would be impossible to arrive there, in consequence of the insupportable heat of the torrid zone. Even granting this could be passed, they observed that the circumference of the earth must be so

* Extendens cœlum sicut pellem. Psal. 103. In the English translation it is Psal. 104, v. 3.

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great as to require at least three years to the voyage, and those who should undertake it must perish of hunger and thirst, from the impossibility of carrying provisions for so long a period. He was told, on the authority of Epicurus*, that admitting the earth to be spherical, it was only inhabitable in the northern hemisphere, and in that section only was canopied by the heavens; that the opposite half was a chaos, a gulf, or a mere waste of water.

Not the least absurd objection advanced was, that should a ship even succeed in reaching, in this way, the extremity of India, she could never get back again; for the rotundity of the globe would present a kind of mountain, up which it would be impossible for her to sail with the most favourable wind†!

Such are specimens of the errors and prejudices, the mingled ignorance and erudition, and the pedantic bigotry, with which Columbus had to contend throughout the examination of his theory. Can we wonder at the difficulties and delays which he experienced at courts, when such vague and crude notions were entertained by the learned men of a university? We must not suppose, however, because the objections here cited are all which remain on record, that they are all which were advanced; these only have been perpetuated on account of their superior absurdity. They were probably advanced by but few, and those persons immersed in theological studies, in cloistered retirement; where the erroneous opinions derived from books, had little opportunity of being corrected by the experience of the day.

There were no doubt objections advanced more cogent in their nature, and more worthy of that distinguished universi-

* Acosta, lib. 1, cap. 1.

† Hist. del Almirante, Cap. 11.

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ty. It is but justice to add, also, that the replies of Columbus had great weight with many of his learned examiners. In answer to the scriptural objections, he submitted that the inspired writers were not speaking technically as cosmographers, but figuratively, in language addressed to all comprehensions. The commentaries of the fathers he treated with deference as pious homilies, but not as philosophical propositions, which it was necessary either to admit or refute. The objections drawn from ancient philosophers he met boldly and ably upon equal terms; for he was deeply studied on all points of cosmography. He showed that the most illustrious of these sages believed both hemispheres to be inhabitable, though they imagined that the torrid zone precluded communication; and he obviated conclusively that difficulty; for he had voyaged to St. George la Mina in Guinea, almost under the equinoctial line, and had found that region not merely traversable, but abounding in population, in fruits and pasturage.

When Columbus took his stand before this learned body, he had appeared the plain and simple navigator; somewhat daunted perhaps by the greatness of his task and the august nature of his auditory. But he had a degree of superstitious feeling which gave him a confidence on the execution of what he conceived his great errand, and he was of an ardent temperament that became heated in action by its own generous fires. Las Casas, and others of his contemporaries, have spoken of his commanding person, his elevated demeanour, his air of authority, his kindling eye, and the persuasive intonations of his voice. How must they have given majesty and force to his words, as, casting aside his maps and charts, and discarding for a time his practical and scientific lore, his visionary spirit took fire at the doctrinal objections of his opponents, and he met them upon their own

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ground, pouring forth those magnificent texts of scripture, and those mysterious predictions of the prophets, which in his enthusiastic moments he considered as types and annunciations of the sublime discovery which he proposed.

Among the number who were convinced by the reasoning, and warmed by the eloquence of Columbus, was Diego de Deza, a worthy and learned friar of the order of St. Dominick, at that time professor of theology in the convent of St. Stephen, but who became afterwards archbishop of Seville, the second ecclesiastical dignitary in Spain. This able and erudite divine was a man whose mind was above the narrow bigotry of bookish lore, one who could appreciate the value of wisdom even when uttered by unlearned lips. He was not a mere passive auditor, he took a generous interest in the cause, and by seconding Columbus with all his powers, calmed the blind zeal of his more bigotted brethren, so as to obtain for him a dispassionate, if not an unprejudiced, hearing. By their united efforts, it is said, they brought over the most learned men of the schools*. One great difficulty was to reconcile the plan of Columbus with the cosmography of Ptolemy, to which all scholars yielded implicit faith. How would the most enlightened of those sages have been astonished, had any one apprized them that the man, Copernicus, was then in existence, whose solar system should reverse the grand theory of Ptolemy, which stationed the earth in the centre of the universe!

Notwithstanding every exertion, however, there was a preponderating mass of inert bigotry, and learned pride, in this erudite body, which refused to yield to the demonstrations of an obscure foreigner, without fortune or connexions, or any academic honours.

† Remesel, Hist. de Chiap. L. 11. C. 7.

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"It was requisite," says Las Casas, "before Columbus could make his solutions and reasonings understood, that he should remove from his auditors those erroneous principles on which their objections were founded; a task always more difficult than that of teaching the doctrine." Occasional conferences took place, but without producing any decision. The ignorant, or what is worse, the prejudiced, remained obstinate in their opposition, with the dogged perseverance of dull men; the more liberal and intelligent felt little interest in discussions wearisome in themselves, and foreign to their ordinary pursuits; even those who listened with approbation to the plan, regarded it only as a delightful vision, full of probability and promise, but one which never could be realized. Fernando de Talavera, to whom the matter was especially intrusted, had too little esteem for it, and was too much occupied with the stir and bustle of public concerns, to press it to a conclusion, and thus the inquiry experienced continual procrastination and neglect.

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CHAPTER V.

FURTHER APPLICATIONS AT THE COURT OF CASTILE—COLUMBUS FOLLOWS THE COURT IN ITS CAMPAIGNS.

1487. THE consultations of the board at Salamanca were interrupted by the departure of the court to Cordova early in the spring of 1487, called away by the concerns of the war, and the memorable campaign against Malaga. Fernando de Talavera, now bishop of Avila, accompanied the queen as her confessor. For a long time Columbus was kept in suspense, following the movements of the court. He was encouraged at times by the prospect of his proposition being taken into immediate consideration, conferences being appointed for the purpose; but the tempest of warlike affairs which hurried the court from place to place, and gave it all the bustle and confusion of a camp, continually swept away all questions of less immediate importance. It has generally been supposed that the several years which Columbus wasted in irksome solicitation were spent in the drowsy and monotonous attendance of antichambers; but on the contrary, they were often passed amidst scenes of peril and adventure: and in following up his suit, he was led into some of the most striking situations of this wild, rugged, and mountainous war. Whenever the court had an interval of leisure, there seems to have been a disposition to take up his affair; but the hurry and tempest returned, and the question was again swept away.

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During this time he experienced the scoffs and indignities of which he afterwards complained; being ridiculed by the light and ignorant as a mere dreamer, and stigmatized by the illiberal as an adventurer. The very children, it is said, pointed to their foreheads as he passed, being taught to regard him as a kind of madman. During this long application, he defrayed his expenses in part by the exertion of his talents in making maps. The worthy friar, Diego de Deza, occasionally assisted him with his purse, as well as his good offices with the sovereigns. He was part of the time a guest of Alonzo de Quintanilla, and for a considerable period entertained at the expense of the Duke of Medina Cœli, a nobleman of great possessions, who was much engaged in maritime enterprizes.

It is due to the sovereigns to say, that while Columbus was thus kept in suspense, he was attached to the royal suit, and sums were issued to defray his expenses, and lodgings provided for him, whenever summoned to follow the movements of the court, and attend the consultations that were at various times appointed. Memorandums of several of these sums still exist in the book of accounts of Francisco Gonzalez of Seville, one of the royal treasurers, which has lately been found in the archives of Simancas. From these minutes, we are enabled in some degree to follow the movements of Columbus, during his attendance upon this rambling and warlike court.

One of these memorandums was for money to enable him to come to the court then held in the camp before Malaga, during the memorable siege of 1487, when that city was so obstinately and fiercely defended by the Moors. In the course of this siege, his application to the sovereigns was nearly brought to a violent close; a fanatic Moor having

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attempted to assassinate Ferdinand and Isabella. Mistaking the royal tent, he attacked Don Alvaro of Portugal, and Doña Beatrix de Bobadilla, Marchioness of Moya, instead of the king and queen. After wounding Don Alvaro dangerously, he was foiled in a blow aimed at the marchioness, and immediately cut to pieces by the attendants*. The lady here mentioned was a person of extraordinary merit and force of character. She eventually took a great interest in the suit of Columbus, and had much influence in recommending it to the queen, with whom she was a particular favourite†.

The campaign ended with the capture of Malaga. There appears to have been no time during its stormy siege to attend to the question of Columbus, though Fernando de Talavera, the bishop of Avila, was present, as appears by his entering the captured city in solemn and religious triumph‡. Malaga surrendered on the 18th of August, 1487, and the court had scarcely time to return to Cordova, when it was driven away by pestilence.

The sovereigns passed the winter in Saragossa, occupied in various public affairs of moment; they entered the Moorish territories by way of Murcia in the ensuing spring; and after a short campaign retired to Valladolid for the ensuing winter. Whether Columbus accompanied the court during these migrations does not appear, although an order for three thousand maravedis, dated June, 1488, makes it probable; but what quiet hearing could be expected from a court surrounded by the din of arms, and continually on the march!

* Pulgar, Cronica, C. 87. P. Martyr.

† Retrato del Bueno Vassallo, L. 11, C. 16.

‡ Pulgar, C.

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That, notwithstanding these delays, he was still encouraged in his expectations, during this interval, is highly probable. In the course of the spring he received a letter from John II. king of Portugal, dated 20th of March, 1488, inviting him to return to his court, and assuring him of protection from any suits of either a civil or criminal nature, that might be pending against him. This letter, from its tenor, appears to be a reply to one in which Columbus had commenced negociations to return. He did not think proper, however, to comply with the invitation of the monarch.

1489. In February, 1489, Ferdinand and Isabella repaired from Valladolid to Medina del Campo, where they received an embassy from Henry VII. of England, with whom they formed an alliance. Whether at this time Columbus had any reply to his application to the English court does not appear. That he did, at some time during his negociation in Spain, receive a favourable letter from Henry the VIIth, is expressly stated by himself in one subsequently written by him to Ferdinand and Isabella*.

The Spanish sovereigns returned to Cordova in May, and Columbus appears then to have been brought to mind, and steps taken to have the long adjourned investigation resumed. Diego Ortiz de Zuñiga, in his annals of Seville, says, that the sovereigns wrote to that city, directing lodgings and accommodations to be furnished to Christopher Columbus, who was coming there to the court on a conference of importance. The city fulfilled the command, but the conference was postponed, being interrupted by the campaign, "in which," adds the author, "the same Columbus was found fighting, giving proofs of the distinguished valour which accompanied his wisdom, and his lofty desires†."

* Historia del Almirante, 1. Cap. 12.

† Diego Ortiz de Zuñiga, An. de Sevilla, L. 12, anno 1489, p. 404.

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A royal order is also extant, perhaps the letter here alluded to, dated Cordova, May 12, in the same year. It is addressed to the magistrates of all cities and towns, ordering that lodgings should be furnished gratis to Christopher Columbus and his attendants, being employed in matters connected with the royal service*.

The campaign, in which the historian of Seville ascribes to Columbus so honourable a part, was one of the most glorious of that war. Queen Isabella attended with her court, including as usual a stately train of prelates and friars, among whom is particularly mentioned the procrastinating arbiter of the pretensions of Columbus, Fernando de Talavera. Much of the success of the campaign is ascribed to the presence and counsel of Isabella. The city of Baza, which had resisted valiantly for upwards of six months, surrendered soon after her arrival; and on the 22d of December, Columbus beheld Muley Boabdil, the elder of the two rival kings of Granada, surrender in person all his remaining possessions, and his right to the crown, to the Spanish sovereigns.

During this siege, a circumstance took place, which appears to have made a deep impression on the devout and enthusiastic spirit of Columbus. Two reverend friars arrived at the Spanish camp, employed in the holy sepulchre at Jerusalem. They brought a message from the Grand Soldan of Egypt, threatening to put to death all the Christians in his dominions, and to destroy the sepulchre, if the sovereigns did not desist from the war against Granada. The menace had no effect in altering the purpose of the sovereigns; but Isabella granted a yearly and perpetual sum of one† thousand ducats in gold for the support of the

* Navarrete, T. 2, Doc. No. 4.

† Or 1,423 dollars—equivalent to 4,269 dollars in our time.

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monks who had charge of the sepulchre, and sent a veil, embroidered with her own hands, to be hung up at its shrine.*

It was probably from conversation with these friars, and from the pious indignation excited by the threat of the Soldan, that Columbus conceived an enthusiastic idea, which he more or less entertained until the day of his death. He determined to devote the profits arising from his contemplated discovery, to a holy enterprize to rescue the sacred chapel from the power of the Infidels.

The bustle and turmoil of this campaign, prevented the conference at Seville; nor did the concerns of Columbus fare better during the subsequent rejoicings.

Ferdinand and Isabella entered Seville in February, 1490, with great pomp and triumph. There were then preparations made for the marriage of their eldest daughter, the princess Isabella, with the prince Don Alonzo, heir apparent of Portugal. The nuptials were celebrated in the month of April with extraordinary splendour. Throughout the whole winter and spring, the court was in a continual tumult of parade and pleasure; feasts, tournaments, and torch-light processions. What chance had Columbus of being heard in these alternate uproars of war and festivity!

1491. It was not until the winter of 1491, that Columbus could obtain the long delayed hearing of his application. The sovereigns were preparing to depart on their final campaign in the Vega of Granada, with a determination never to raise their camp from before that city, until their victorious banners should float upon its towers.

Columbus saw that if once the court got into movement, there would be an end to all hopes of an attention to his affairs. He pressed, therefore, for a decisive reply. It is

* Garibay, Compend. Hist. L. 18, C. 36.

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probable that the conference now took place, which the historian of Seville mentions as having been postponed; and that the council of scientific men, to whom the project had been referred, was again convened.

It is certain that at this time Fernando de Talavera being called upon by the sovereigns, gave the report of this learned body. He informed their majesties that it was the general opinion of the junto, that the scheme proposed was vain and impossible; and that it did not become such great princes to engage in an enterprize of the kind on such weak grounds as had been advanced*.

Although such was the general report of the committee, Columbus had made an impression upon several of those learned men, which operated strongly in his favour. He had an active friend in Fray Diego Deza, tutor to Prince Juan, who, from his situation and clerical character, had access to the royal ear. The names of several men of rank and merit are also mentioned, who were friendly to his suit. In fact, the grave and honourable demeanour of Columbus, his clear knowledge of every thing relative to his profession, the loftiness and generosity of his views, and his energetic manner of enforcing them, commanded respect wherever he could succeed in fixing attention. A degree of consideration had therefore gradually grown up at court for his enterprize; and, notwithstanding the unfavourable report of the learned junta of Salamanca, the sovereigns seemed unwilling to close the door upon a project which might be so important in its advantages. Fernando de Talavera was commanded to inform Columbus, who was then at Cordova, that the great cares and expenses of the war rendered it impossible for them to engage in any new enterprizes; but

* Hist. del Almirante, Cap. 11.

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that, when the war was concluded, they would have time and inclination to treat with him about what he offered*.

This was but a starved reply to receive after so many years of weary attendance, of anxious expectation, and deferred hopes. Whatever graciousness too there might have been in the message as dictated by the monarchs, was probably lost in the chilling medium through which it passed: at any rate, Columbus was unwilling to receive the reply at the hands of a person who had always showed himself unfriendly; he repaired therefore to the court at Seville, to learn his fate from the lips of the monarchs. Their reply was virtually the same, declining to engage in the enterprize for the present, but holding out hopes of patronage when released from the cares and expenses of the war. Columbus looked upon this as a mere evasive mode of getting rid of his importunities; he believed the sovereigns prepossessed by the objections of the ignorant and the bigotted; and giving up all hopes of countenance from the throne, turned his back upon Seville, filled with disappointment and indignation.

* Historia del Almirante, ubi sup.

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CHAPTER VI.

APPLICATION TO THE DUKE OF MEDINA CŒLI—RETURN TO THE CONVENT OF LA RABIDA.

1491. THOUGH Columbus had now relinquished all expectations of patronage from the Castilian sovereigns, he was unwilling to break off all connexion with Spain. A tie of a tender nature still bound him to the country. During his first visit to Cordova, he had conceived a passion for a lady of that city named Beatrix Enriquez. This attachment has been given as an additional cause of his lingering so long in Spain, and bearing with the delays he experienced. Like most of the particulars of this part of his life, his connexion with this lady is wrapped in obscurity. It does not appear to have been sanctioned by marriage. The lady is said to have been of noble family*. She was the mother of his second son Fernando, who became his historian, and whom he always treated on terms of perfect equality with his legitimate son Diego.

Unwilling to abandon Spain, though despairing of success at court, Columbus now endeavoured to engage some rich and powerful individual in his enterprize. There were several of the Spanish nobles, who had vast possessions, and were a species of petty sovereigns in their domains. Among these were the dukes of Medina Sidonia, and Medina Cœli.

* Zuniga, Annales Eccles. de Seville, L. 14, p. 496.

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Both had estates like principalities, lying along the seaboard, with ports and shipping at their command. These noblemen served the crown more as allied princes than as vassals, bringing armies of their retainers into the field, led on by their own captains, or by themselves in person. They assisted with their armadas, and they contributed with their treasures to the successes of the war, but maintained a jealous right over the disposition of their forces. During the siege of Malaga, the duke of Medina Sidonia volunteered at one time a large force of the cavaliers of his household, sending twenty thousand doblas of gold*, and one hundred vessels, some armed, and others laden with provisions, from his rich domains. The domestic establishments of these nobles were like the establishments of petty sovereigns; whole armies of retainers thronged their various estates; and their houses were filled with persons of merit, and with young cavaliers of family, reared under their auspices in the exercise of arts and arms.

To the duke of Medina Sidonia Columbus first applied. They had many interviews and conversations, but could never come to a conclusion†. The duke was tempted for a time by the magnificent anticipations held out; but the very splendour of these anticipations threw a colouring of exaggeration over the enterprize, and Gomera assures us that he finally rejected it as the dream of an Italian visionary‡.

Columbus next turned to the duke of Medina Cœli, and for a time with great prospect of success. They had vari-

* Or 35,514 dollars, and equivalent to the present value of 106,542 dollars.

† Hist. del Almirante, C. 12. Herrera. Hist. Ind. Decad. 1, L. 1, C. 8.

‡ Gomera, Hist. Ind. C. 15.

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ous negociations, and at one time the duke was actually on the point of despatching him on the contemplated voyage, with three or four caravels which he had ready in his port. Fearing, however, that such an expedition would be strongly discountenanced by the crown, he suddenly abandoned it, observing that the object was too great to be grasped by a subject, and was fit only for a sovereign power*. He advised Columbus to apply once more to the Spanish monarchs, and offered to use his influence with the queen.

Columbus saw time and life thus wasting away in tantalizing hopes and bitter disappointments. He felt averse to the idea of again returning to follow the court in all its baffling movements. He had received a letter of encouragement from the king of France†, and determined to lose no time in repairing to Paris. With this intention he repaired to the convent of La Rabida to seek his eldest son Diego, who still remained under the care of his zealous friend friar Juan Perez, proposing to leave him with his other son at Cordova.

When the worthy friar beheld Columbus once more arrive at the gate of his convent, after nearly seven years solicitation at the court, and saw by the humility of his garb, the poverty and disappointment he had experienced, he was greatly moved; but when he found that the voyager was on the point of abandoning Spain, and that so important an enterprize was about to be lost for ever to the country, his ardent spirit was powerfully excited. He summoned his friend the learned physician, Garcia Fernandez, and they had further consultations on the scheme of Columbus. They

* Letter of Duke of Medina Cœli to the Grand Cardinal. Vide Navarrete, T. 2. Doc. 14.

† Hist. del Almirante, Cap. 12.

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called in also the counsel of Martin Alonzo Pinzon, the head of a family of wealthy and distinguished navigators of Palos, who were celebrated for their practical experience, and their adventurous expeditions. Pinzon gave the plan of Columbus his decided approbation, offering to engage in it with purse and person, and to bear the expenses of Columbus in a renewed application to the court.

Friar Juan Perez was confirmed in his faith by the concurrence of his learned and his practical counsellors. He had once been confessor to the queen, and knew that she was always accessible to persons of his sacred calling. He proposed to write to her immediately on the subject, and entreated Columbus to delay his journey until an answer could be received. Columbus was easily persuaded, for he had become attached to Spain by the ties he had formed at Cordova. He felt as if in leaving it he was again abandoning his home. He was also reluctant to renew in another court the vexations and disappointments he had experienced in Spain and Portugal.

Having agreed to remain, the little council at the convent cast round their eyes for an ambassador to depart upon this momentous mission. They chose one Sebastian Rodriguez, a pilot of Lepe, one of the most shrewd and important personages in this maritime neighbourhood. The queen was at this time at Santa Fé, the military city which had been built in the vega before Granada, after the conflagration of the royal camp. The honest pilot acquitted himself faithfully, expeditiously, and successfully, in his embassy. He found access to the benignant princess, and delivered the epistle of the friar. Isabella had already been favourably disposed to the proposition of Columbus; she had received a letter in recommendation of it likewise from the duke of Medina Cœli, at the close of his late negociation with the voyager.

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She wrote in reply to Juan Perez, thanking him for his timely services, and requesting that he would repair immediately to the court, leaving Christopher Columbus in confident hope, until he should hear further from her. This royal letter was brought back by the pilot, at the end of fourteen days, and spread great joy in the little junto at the convent. No sooner did the warm-hearted friar receive it, than he saddled his mule, and departed privately before midnight for the court. He journeyed through the conquered countries of the Moors, and rode into the newly erected city of Santa Fé, where the sovereigns were superintending the close investment of the capital of Granada.

The sacred office of Juan Perez gained him a ready entrance in a court distinguished for religious zeal; and once admitted to the presence of the queen, his former relation, as father confessor, gave him great freedom of counsel. He pleaded the cause of Columbus with characteristic enthusiasm, speaking from actual knowledge of his honourable motives, his professional knowledge and experience, and his perfect capacity to fulfil the undertaking. He represented the solid principles upon which the enterprize was founded; the advantages that must attend its success; and the glory it must shed upon the Spanish crown.

It is probable that Isabella had never heard the proposition urged with such honest zeal and impressive eloquence. Being naturally more sanguine and susceptible than the king, and more open to warm and generous impulses, she was moved by the representations of Juan Perez, which were warmly seconded by her favourite the Marchioness of Moya, who entered into the affair with a woman's disinterested enthusiasm*. The queen requested that Columbus might

* Retrato del Buen Vassallo, L. 2, Cap. 16.

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be again sent to her; and with the kind considerateness which characterized her, bethinking herself of his poverty, and his humble plight, ordered that *twenty thousand maravedis in florins should be forwarded to him, to bear his travelling expenses, to provide him with a mule for his journey, and to furnish him with decent raiment, that he might make a respectable appearance at the court.

The worthy friar lost no time in communicating the result of his mission. He transmitted the money, and a letter, by the hands of an inhabitant of Palos, to the physician Garcia Fernandez, who delivered them to Columbus. The latter complied with the instructions conveyed in the epistle. He exchanged his thread-bare garb for one more suited to the sphere of a court, and purchasing a mule, set out once more, reanimated by hope, for the camp before Granada†.

* Or seventy-two dollars—equivalent to two hundred and sixteen dollars of the present day.

† Most of the particulars of this second visit of Columbus to the convent of La Rabida, are from the testimony rendered by Garcia Fernandez in the law-suit between Diego, the son of Columbus, and the crown.

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CHAPTER VII.

APPLICATION TO THE COURT AT THE TIME OF THE SURRENDER OF GRANADA.

1492. WHEN Columbus arrived at the court, he experienced a favourable reception, and was given in hospitable charge to his steady friend Alonzo de Quintanilla, the accountant general. The moment, however, was too eventful for his business to receive immediate attention. He arrived in time to witness the memorable surrender of Granada to the Spanish arms. He beheld Boabdil, the last of the Moorish kings, sally forth from the Alhambra, and yield up the keys of that favourite seat of Moorish power; while the king and queen, with all the chivalry, and rank and magnificence of Spain, moved forward in proud and solemn procession, to receive this token of submission. It was one of the most brilliant triumphs in Spanish history. After near eight hundred years of painful struggle, the crescent was completely cast down, the cross exalted in its place, and the standard of Spain was seen floating on the highest tower of the Alhambra. The whole court and army was abandoned to jubilee. The air resounded with shouts of joy, with songs of triumph, and hymns of thanksgiving. On every side were beheld military rejoicings and religious oblations; for it was considered a triumph not merely of arms but of the faith. The king and queen moved in the midst, in more than common magnificence, while every eye regarded them

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as more than mortal; as if sent by heaven for the salvation and building up of Spain*. The court was thronged by the most illustrious of that warlike country, and stirring era; by the flower of its nobility, by the most dignified of its prelacy, by bards and minstrels, and all the retinue of a romantic and picturesque age. There was nothing but the glittering of arms, the rustling of robes, the sound of music and festivity.

Do we want a picture of our navigator during this brilliant and triumphant scene? It is furnished by a Spanish writer: "A man obscure and but little known followed at this time the court. Confounded in the crowd of importunate applicants, feeding his imagination in the corners of antichambers with the pompous project of discovering a world, melancholy and dejected in the midst of the general rejoicing, he beheld with indifference, and almost with contempt, the conclusion of a conquest which swelled all bosoms with jubilee, and seemed to have reached the utmost bounds of desire. That man was Christopher Columbus†."

The moment had now arrived, however, when the monarchs stood pledged to attend to his proposals. The war with the Moors was at an end, Spain was delivered from its intruders, and its sovereigns might securely turn their views to foreign enterprize. They kept their word with Columbus. Persons of confidence were appointed to negociate with him, among whom was Fernando de Talavera, who by the recent conquest had risen to be Archbishop of Granada. At the very outset of their negociation, however, unexpected difficulties arose. So fully imbued was Columbus with the grandeur of his enterprize, that he would listen to none but

* Mariana, Hist. de Esp. Lib. 25, C. 18.

† Clemencin. Elogio de la Reina Catolica, p. 20.

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princely conditions. His principal stipulation was that he should be invested with the titles and privileges of Admiral and Viceroy over the countries he should discover, with one tenth of all gains, either by trade or conquest. The courtiers who treated with him were indignant at such a demand. Their pride was shocked to see one, whom they had considered as a needy adventurer, aspiring to rank and dignities superior to their own. One observed with a sneer that it was a shrewd arrangement which he proposed, whereby he was secure, at all events, of the honour of a command, and had nothing to lose in case of failure. To this Columbus promptly replied, by offering to furnish one eighth of the cost, on condition of enjoying an eighth of the profits.

His terms, however, were pronounced inadmissible. Fernando de Talavera had always considered Columbus a dreaming speculator, or a needy solicitor for bread; but to see this man who had for years been an indigent and threadbare solicitor in his antichamber, assuming so lofty a tone, and claiming an office that approached to the awful dignity of the throne, excited the astonishment as well as indignation of the prelate. He represented to Isabella that it would be degrading to the dignity of so illustrious a crown, to lavish such distinguished honours upon a nameless stranger. Such terms, he observed, even in case of success, would be exorbitant; but in case of failure, would be cited with ridicule, as evidence of the gross credulity of the Spanish monarchs.

Isabella was always attentive to the opinions of her ghostly advisers, and the archbishop being her confessor had peculiar influence. His suggestions checked her dawning favour. She thought the proposed advantages might be purchased at too great a price. More moderate conditions were offered to Columbus, and such as appeared highly honourable and advantageous. It was all in vain; he would

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not cede one point of his demands, and the negociation was broken off.

It is impossible not to admire the great constancy of purpose, and loftiness of spirit displayed by Columbus ever since he had conceived the sublime idea of his discovery. More than eighteen years had elapsed since his correspondence with Paolo Toscanelli, of Florence, wherein he had announced his design. The greatest part of that time had been consumed in applications at various courts. During that period, what poverty, neglect, ridicule, contumely and disappointment had he not suffered! Nothing, however, could shake his perseverance, nor make him descend to terms which he considered beneath the dignity of his enterprize. In all his negociations he forgot his present obscurity, he forgot his present indigence; his ardent imagination realized the magnitude of his contemplated discoveries, and he felt himself negociating about empire.

Though so large a portion of life had worn away in fruitless solicitings; though there was no certainty that the same weary career was not to be entered upon at any other court, yet so indignant was he at the repeated disappointments he had experienced in Spain, that he determined to abandon it for ever, rather than compromise his demands. Taking leave of his friends, therefore, he mounted his steed, and sallied forth from Santa Fé in the beginning of February, 1492, on his way to Cordova, from whence he intended to depart immediately for France.

When the few friends who were zealous believers in the theory of Columbus, saw him really on the point of abandoning the country, they were filled with distress, considering his departure an irreparable loss to the nation. Among the number was Luis de St. Angel, receiver of the ecclesiastical revenues in Arragon. He determined to make one bold ef-

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fort to avert the evil. He obtained an immediate audience of the queen, accompanied by Alonzo de Quintanilla, who supported him warmly in all his instances. The exigency of the moment gave him courage and eloquence. He did not restrain himself to entreaties; he mingled almost reproaches; he expressed his astonishment that a queen who had evinced the spirit to undertake so many great and perilous enterprizes, should hesitate at one where the loss could be so trifling, while the gain might be incalculable. He reminded her how much might be done for the glory of God, the exaltation of the church, and the extension of her own power and dominion. What cause of regret to herself, of triumph to her enemies, of sorrow to her friends, should this enterprize, thus rejected by her, be accomplished by some other power. He reminded her what fame and dominion other princes had acquired by their discoveries; here was an opportunity to surpass them all. He entreated her majesty not to be misled by the assertions of learned men, that the project was the dream of a visionary. He vindicated the judgment of Columbus, and the soundness and practicability of his plans. Neither would even his failure reflect disgrace upon the crown. It was worth the trouble and expense to clear up even a doubt upon a matter of such importance; for it belonged to enlightened and magnanimous princes to investigate questions of the kind, and to explore the wonders and secrets of the universe. He stated the liberal offer of Columbus to bear an eighth of the expense, and informed her that all the requisites for this great enterprize consisted but of two vessels, and about three thousand crowns.

These and many more arguments were urged, with that persuasive power which honest zeal imparts. The marchioness of Moya, it is said, exerted her eloquence also, to

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effect the conquest of the queen. The generous spirit of Isabella was enkindled. It seemed as if, for the first time, the subject broke upon her mind in its real grandeur, and she declared her resolution to undertake the enterprize.

There was still a moment's hesitation. The king looked coldly on the affair, and the royal finances were absolutely drained by the war. Some time must be given to replenish them. How could she draw on an exhausted treasury for a measure to which the king was adverse! St. Angel watched this suspense with trembling anxiety. The next moment reassured him. With an enthusiasm worthy of herself, and of the cause, Isabella exclaimed, "I undertake the enterprize for my own crown of Castile, and will pledge my private jewels to raise the necessary funds." This was the grandest moment in the life of Isabella; it stamped her renown for ever as the patroness of the discovery of the new world.

St. Angel, eager to secure this noble impulse, assured her majesty that there would be no need of pledging her jewels, as he was ready to advance the necessary funds. His offer was gladly accepted; the funds really came from the coffers of Arragon; but king Ferdinand took care to have the loan repaid a few years afterwards, by employing a part of the first gold brought by Columbus from the new world, in gilding the vaulted ceilings of the royal saloon, in the grand palace of Saragossa, the Aljaferia, or ancient abode of the Moorish kings*.

The queen dispatched a messenger on horseback with all speed to call back Columbus. He was overtaken two leagues from Granada, at the bridge of Pinos, a pass of the

* Bart. Leonardo de Argensola. Annales de Arragon, lib. 1, cap. 10.

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mountains famous for bloody encounters between the Christians and Infidels during the Moorish wars. When the courier had delivered his message, Columbus hesitated to subject himself again to the delays and equivocations of the court. When he was informed, however, of the ardour expressed by the queen, and the positive promise she had given, he returned immediately to Santa Fé, confiding in the noble probity of that princess.

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CHAPTER VIII.

ARRANGEMENT WITH THE SPANISH SOVEREIGNS.

1492. On arriving at Santa Fé, Columbus had an immediate audience of the queen, and the benignity with which she received him atoned for all past neglect. Her favourable countenance dispelled every cloud of doubt and difficulty. The concurrence of the king was readily obtained. His objections had been removed by the mediation of various persons, among whom is particularly mentioned his grand chamberlain and favourite, Juan Cabrero; but it was principally through deference to the zeal displayed by the queen, that he yielded his tardy concurrence. Isabella was thenceforward the soul of this grand enterprize. She was prompted by lofty and generous enthusiasm; while the king remained cold and calculating in this, as in all his other undertakings.

One of the great objects held out by Columbus in his undertaking, was the propagation of the Christian faith. He expected to arrive at the extremity of Asia, at the vast and magnificent empire of the Grand Khan, and to visit the dependent islands, of which he had read such extravagant accounts in the writings of Marco Polo. In describing these opulent and semi-barbarous regions, he had reminded their majesties of the inclination manifested in former times by the Grand Khan, to embrace the Christian faith; and of the missions which had been sent by popes and pious sovereigns, to

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instruct him and his subjects in Catholic doctrines. He now considered himself about to effect this great work. He contemplated that by means of his discovery an immediate intercourse might be opened with this immense empire; that the whole might speedily be brought into subjection to the church; and thus, as had been foretold in holy writ, the light of revelation might be extended to the remotest ends of the earth. Ferdinand listened to this suggestion with complacency. He made his religion subservient to his interests; and had found, on the recent conquest of Granada, that, extending the sway of the church, might be made a laudable means of extending his own dominions. According to the doctrines of the day, every nation that refused to acknowledge the truths of Christianity, was fair spoil for a Christian invader; and it is probable that Ferdinand was more stimulated by the accounts given by Columbus of the wealth of Mangi, Cathay, and other provinces belonging to the Grand Khan, than by any anxiety for the conversion of him and his semi-barbarous subjects. Isabella had nobler inducements. She was filled with pious zeal at the idea of effecting such a great work of salvation. From different motives, therefore, both of the sovereigns accorded with the views of Columbus in this particular, and when he afterwards departed on his voyage, letters were actually given him for the Grand Khan of Tartary.

The ardent enthusiasm of Columbus did not stop here. In the free and unrestrained communications which were now permitted him with the sovereigns, his visionary spirit kindled up with his anticipations of the boundless wealth that was to be realized by his discoveries, and he suggested that the treasures thus acquired, should be consecrated to the pious purpose of rescuing the holy sepulchre of Jerusalem from the power of the Infidels. The sovereigns smiled at

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this sally of the imagination, but expressed themselves well pleased with it, and assured him that without the funds he anticipated, they should be well disposed to that holy undertaking*. What the king and queen, however, may have considered a mere sally of momentary excitement, was a deep and cherished design of Columbus. It is a curious and characteristic fact which has never been particularly noticed, that the recovery of the holy sepulchre was one of the great objects of his ambition, meditated throughout the remainder of his life, and solemnly provided for in his will. In fact, he considered it as one of the great works for which he was chosen by heaven, as an agent, and he afterwards looked upon his great discovery as but a preparatory dispensation of providence to promote its accomplishment.

A perfect understanding being thus effected with the sovereigns, capitulations of an arrangement were ordered to be drawn out by Juan de Coloma, the royal secretary. They were to the following effect:

1. That Columbus should have, for himself during his life, and his heirs and successors for ever, the office of admiral in all the lands and continents which he might discover or acquire in the Ocean sea, with similar honours and prerogatives to those enjoyed by the high admiral of Castile in his district.

2. That he should be viceroy and governor general over all the said lands and continents; with the privilege of nominating three candidates for the government of each island or province, one of whom should be selected by the sovereigns.

* Protesté á vuestras Altezas que toda la ganancia desta mi empresa se gastase en la conquista de Jerusalem, y vuestras altezas se vieron, y dijeron que les placia, y que sin esto tenian aquella gana. Journal of Columb. Navarrete, T. 1, p. 117.

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3. That he should be entitled to reserve for himself one tenth of all pearls, precious stones, gold, silver, spices, and all other articles and merchandises, in whatever manner found, bought, bartered, or gained within his admiralty, the costs being first deducted.

4. That he, or his lieutenant, should be the sole judge in all causes and disputes arising out of traffic between those countries and Spain: provided the high admiral of Castile had similar jurisdiction in his district.

5. That he might then, and at all after times, contribute an eighth part of the expense in fitting out vessels to sail on this enterprize, and receive an eighth part of the profits.

The last stipulation, which admits Columbus to bear an eighth of the enterprize, was made in consequence of his indignant proffer, on being reproached with demanding ample emoluments, while incurring no portion of the charge. He fulfilled this engagement through the assistance of the Pinzons of Palos, and added a third vessel to the armament. Thus, one eighth of the expense attendant on this grand expedition, undertaken by a powerful nation, was actually borne by the individual who conceived it, and who likewise risked his life on its success.

The capitulations were signed by Ferdinand and Isabella at the city of Santa Fé, in the vega or plain of Granada, on the 17th of April, 1492. A letter of privilege or commission to Columbus, of similar purport, was drawn out in form, and issued by the sovereigns in the city of Granada, on the 30th of the same month. In this the dignities and prerogatives of viceroy and governor were likewise made hereditary in his family; and he and his heirs were authorized to prefix the title of Don to their names; a distinction accorded in those days only to persons of rank and estate, though it has since lost all value from being universally used in Spain.

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All the royal documents issued on this occasion bore equally the signatures of Ferdinand and Isabella, but her separate crown of Castile defrayed all the expense, and during her life few persons, except Castilians, were permitted to establish themselves in the new territories*. It is true, some claim has been set up by the Arragonese to a share in the glory of this enterprize, in consequence of seventeen thousand florins being loaned by the accountant St. Angel, out of the treasury of king Ferdinand. That prudent monarch, however, took care to have his kingdom indemnified some few years afterwards; for, in remuneration of this loan, a part of the first gold brought by Columbus from the new world, was employed in gilding the vaults and ceilings of the royal saloon in the grand palace of Saragossa, in Arragon, anciently the Aljisaria, or abode of the Moorish kings†.

The port of Palos de Moguer in Andalusia, was fixed on as the place where the necessary armament was to be fitted out. This port, in consequence of some misconduct, had been condemned by the royal council to serve the crown for one year, with two armed caravels. A royal order was signed on the 30th of April, commanding the authorities of Palos to have the two caravels ready for sea within ten days after receiving this notice, and to place them and their crews at the disposal of Columbus. The latter was likewise empowered to procure and fit out a third vessel. The crews of all three were to receive the ordinary wages of seamen employed in armed vessels, and to be paid four months in advance. They were to sail in such direction as Columbus, under the royal authority, should command, and were to obey him in all things, with merely one stipulation, that nei-

* Charlevoix, Hist. St. Domingo, L. 1, p. 79.

† Argensola, Annales de Arragon, L. 1, C. 10.

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ther he nor they were to go to St. George la Mina, on the coast of Guinea, nor any other of the lately discovered possessions of Portugal. A certificate of their good conduct, signed by Columbus, was to be the discharge of their obligation to the crown*. Orders were likewise issued by the sovereigns, addressed to the public authorities, and the people of all ranks and conditions, in the maritime borders of Andalusia, commanding them to furnish supplies and assistance of all kinds, at reasonable prices, for the fitting out of the vessels: and penalties were denounced on such as should cause any impediment. No duties were to be exacted for any articles furnished to the vessels; and all criminal processes against the person or property of any individual engaged in the expedition, was to be suspended during his absence, and for two months after his return†.

A home-felt mark of favour, characteristic of the kind and considerate heart of Isabella, was accorded to Columbus before his departure from the court. An albala, or letter patent, was issued by the queen on the 8th of May, appointing his son Diego page to prince Juan, the heir apparent, with an allowance for his support‡; an honour granted only to the sons of persons of distinguished rank.

Thus gratified in his dearest wishes, after a course of delays and disappointments sufficient to have reduced any ordinary man to despair, Columbus took leave of the court on the 12th of May, and set out joyfully for Palos. Let those who are disposed to faint under difficulties, in the prosecution of any great and worthy undertaking, remember that eighteen years elapsed after the time that Columbus con-

* Navarrete, Collec. de Viages, T. 2, Document 6.

† Idem. Documents 8, 9.

‡ Idem, ubi sup. Doc. 11.

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ceived his enterprize, before he was enabled to carry it into effect; that most of that time was past in almost hopeless solicitation, amidst poverty, neglect, and taunting ridicule; that the prime of his life had wasted away in the struggle, and that when his perseverance was finally crowned with success, he was about his fifty-sixth year. His example should encourage the enterprising never to despair.

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CHAPTER IX.

PREPARATIONS FOR THE EXPEDITION AT THE PORT OF PALOS.

1492. COLUMBUS once more presented himself at the gate of the convent of La Rabida, but he now appeared in triumph. He was received with open arms by the worthy prior, and again became his guest, during his sojourn at Palos*. The character and station of Juan Perez gave him great importance in the neighbourhood, and he exerted it to the utmost in support of the desired enterprize. Attended by this zealous friend, Columbus repaired, on the 23d of May, to the church of St. George in Palos. There the royal order for two caravels to be furnished by the town and put at his disposition, was formally read by the notary public of the place, in presence of the alcaldes and regidors, and many of the inhabitants, and full compliance was promised†.

When the nature of the intended expedition came to be known, however, astonishment and a degree of horror prevailed throughout the place. The inhabitants considered the ships and crews demanded of them in the light of sacrifices, devoted to destruction. The owners of vessels refused to furnish them for so desperate a service, and the boldest seamen shrunk from such a wild and chimerical cruise

* Oviedo, Cronica de las Indias, L. 2, C. 5.

† Navarrete, Collec. de Viages, T. 2, Doc. 7.

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into the wilderness of the ocean. All the frightful tales and fables, with which ignorance and superstition are prone to people regions obscure and mysterious, were conjured up concerning the unknown parts of the deep, and circulated by the gossips of Palos, to deter any one from embarking in the enterprize.

Nothing can be a stronger evidence of the bold nature of this undertaking, than the extreme dread with which it was regarded by a maritime community, composed of some of the most adventurous navigators of the age. Notwithstanding the peremptory tenor of the royal order, and the promise of compliance on the part of the magistrates, weeks elapsed without any thing being done in fulfilment of its demands. The worthy prior of La Rabida backed the applications of Columbus with all his influence and eloquence, but in vain; not a vessel was to be procured.

Upon this more absolute mandates were issued by the sovereigns, dated the 20th of June, ordering the magistrates of the coast of Andalusia to press into the service any vessels they might think proper, belonging to Spanish subjects, and to oblige the masters and crews to sail with Columbus, in whatever direction he should be sent by royal command. Juan de Peñalosa, an officer of the royal household, was sent to see that this order was properly complied with, receiving two hundred maravedis a day, as long as he was occupied in the business, which sum was to be exacted from such as should be disobedient and delinquent, together with other penalties expressed in the mandate. This letter was acted upon by Columbus in Palos, and the neighbouring town of Moguer, but apparently with as little success as the preceding one. The communities of those places were thrown into complete confusion: altercations and disturbances took place, but nothing of consequence was effected.

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At length Martin Alonzo Pinzon, a rich and enterprising navigator, who has already been mentioned, came forward and took a decided and personal interest in the expedition. What understanding he had with Columbus as to his remuneration, does not appear. In the testimony given many years afterwards, in the suit between Don Diego, the son of Columbus, and the crown, it was affirmed by several witnesses that Pinzon was to divide with him his share of the profits; but the evidence in that law-suit was so full of contradictions and palpable falsehoods, that it is difficult to sift the truth from it. As no immediate profits resulted from the expedition, no claim of the kind was brought forward. Certain it is, that the assistance of Pinzon was most timely and efficacious, and many of the witnesses in that suit concurred in declaring that, but for him, it would have been impossible to fit out the necessary armament. He and his brother Vicente Yañez Pinzon, likewise a navigator of great courage and ability, who afterwards rose to distinction, possessed vessels, and had seamen in their employ. They were related also to many of the seafaring inhabitants of Palos and Moguer, and had great influence throughout the neighbourhood. It is supposed that they supplied Columbus with funds to pay the eighth share of the expense, which he was bound to advance. They furnished, also, one, at least, of the ships, and they resolved to take commands and sail in the expedition. Their example had a wonderful effect, and, aided by their persuasions, induced a great number of their relations and friends to embark, so that, through their strenuous exertions, the vessels were ready for sea within a month after they had thus engaged in their equipment*.

* Evidence of Arias Perez in the law-suit.

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After the great difficulties made by various courts in furnishing this expedition, it is surprising how inconsiderable an armament was required. It is evident that Columbus had reduced his requisitions to the narrowest limits, lest any great expense should cause impediment. Three small vessels were apparently all that he had requested. Two of them were light barques, called caravels, not superior to river and coasting craft of more modern days. Specimens of this class of vessels exist in old prints and paintings*. They are represented as open, and without deck in the center, but built up high at the prow and stern, with forecastles and cabins for the accommodation of the crew. Peter Martyr, the learned contemporary of Columbus, says that only one of the three vessels was decked†. The smallness of the vessels was considered an advantage by Columbus, in a voyage of discovery, enabling him to run close to the shores, and to enter shallow rivers and harbours. In his third voyage, when coasting the gulf of Paria, he complained of the size of his ship, being nearly a hundred tons burthen. But that such long and perilous expeditions, into unknown seas, should be undertaken in vessels without decks, and that they should live through the violent tempests by which they were frequently assailed, remain among the singular circumstances of these daring voyages.

During the equipment of the vessels, troubles and difficulties continued to arise. One of the vessels, named the Pinta, together with its owners and people, had been pressed into the service by the magistrates, under the arbitrary mandate of the sovereigns, and it was a striking instance of the despotic

* See Illustrations, article, "Ships of Columbus."

† P. Martyr. Decad. 1, L. 1.

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authority exercised over commerce in those times, that respectable individuals should thus be compelled to engage, with persons and ships, in what appeared to them a mad and desperate enterprize. The owners of this vessel, Gomez Rascon and Christoval Quintero, showed the greatest repugnance to the voyage, and took an active part in certain quarrels and contentions which occurred*. Various mariners had likewise been compelled to embark in the other ships. All kinds of obstacles were thrown in the way, to retard or defeat the voyage, by these people and their friends. The caulkers employed upon the vessels did their work in a careless and imperfect manner, and on being commanded to do it over again they absconded†. Some of the seamen who had enlisted willingly, repented of their hardihood, or were dissuaded by their relatives, and sought to retract; others deserted and concealed themselves. Every thing had to be effected by the most harsh and arbitrary measures, and in defiance of popular prejudice and opposition.

At length, by the beginning of August, every difficulty was vanquished, and the vessels were ready for sea. The largest, which had been prepared expressly for the voyage, and was decked, was called the Santa Maria: on board of this ship Columbus hoisted his flag. The second, called the Pinta, was commanded by Martin Alonzo Pinzon, accompanied by his brother Francisco Martin, as pilot. The third, called the Niña, had lateen sails, and was commanded by the third of the brothers, Vicente Yañez Pinzon. There

* Journal of Columb. Navarrete, T. 1. p. 4. Hist. del Almirante, Cap. 15.

† Las Casas, Hist. Ind. L. 1. C. 77. MS.

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were three other pilots, Sancho Ruiz, Pedro Alonzo Niño, and Bartolomeo Roldan. Roderigo Sanchez of Segovia was inspector general of the armament, and Diego de Arana, a native of Cordova, chief alguazil. Roderigo de Escobar went as royal notary, an officer always sent in the armaments of the crown, to take official note of all transactions. There were also a doctor and a surgeon, together with various private adventurers, several servants, and ninety mariners, making in all one hundred and twenty persons*.

Previous to departing on his voyage, Columbus took his son Diego from the convent of La Rabida, and placed him under the guardianship of Juan Rodriguez Cabezudo, an inhabitant of the town of Moguer, and Martin Sanchez, an ecclesiastic of the same place†; probably to give him some knowledge of the world, previous to his being sent to court.

The squadron being ready to put to sea, Columbus, impressed with the solemnity of his undertaking, confessed himself to the friar Juan Perez, and partook of the sacrament of the communion. His example was followed by his officers and crew, and they entered upon their enterprize full of awe, and with the most devout and affecting ceremonials, committing themselves to the especial guidance and protection of heaven. A deep gloom was spread over the whole community of Palos at their departure, for almost every one had some relative or friend on board of the squadron.

* Charlevoix, Hist. St. Doming. L. 1. Munos. Hist. Nuevo Mundo, L. 2.

† Testimony of Juan Rodriguez Cabezudo in the law-suit between Don Diego Columbus and the Fiscal.

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The spirits of the seamen, already depressed by their own fears, were still more cast down at the affliction of those they left behind, who took leave of them with tears and lamentations and dismal forebodings, as of men they were never to behold again.

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LIFE AND VOYAGES

OF

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS.

BOOK III.

CHAPTER I.

DEPARTURE OF COLUMBUS ON HIS FIRST VOYAGE.

1492. It was on Friday, the third of August, 1492, at eight o'clock in the morning, that Columbus set sail on his first voyage of discovery. He departed from the bar of Saltes, a small island formed by the arms of the river Odiel, in front of the town of Huelva, steering in a south-westerly direction, for the Canary islands, from whence it was his intention to strike due west.

Of this voyage he commenced a regular journal, intended for the inspection of the Spanish sovereigns. It opened with a stately prologue, wherein, in the following words, were set forth the motives and views which led to his expedition:

"In Nomine D. N. Jesu Christi. Whereas most Christian, most high, most excellent and most powerful princes, king and queen of the Spains, and of the islands of the sea, our sovereigns, in this present year of 1492, after your high-

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nesses had put an end to the war with the Moors who ruled in Europe, and had concluded that warfare in the great city of Granada, where, on the second of January, of this present year, I saw the royal banners of your highnesses placed by force of arms on the towers of the Alhambra, which is the fortress of that city, and beheld the Moorish king sally forth from the gates of the city, and kiss the royal hands of your highnesses and of my lord the prince; and immediately in that same month, in consequence of the information which I had given to your highnesses of the lands of India, and of a prince who is called the Grand Khan, which is to say in our language, king of kings; how that many times he and his predecessors had sent to Rome to entreat for doctors of our holy faith, to instruct him in the same; and that the holy father had never provided him with them, and thus so many people were lost, believing in idolatries, and imbibing doctrines of perdition; therefore your highnesses, as catholic Christians and princes, lovers and promoters of the holy Christian faith, and enemies of the sect of Mahomet, and of all idolatries and heresies, determined to send me, Christopher Columbus, to the said parts of India, to see the said princes, and the people and lands, and discover the nature and disposition of them all, and the means to be taken for the conversion of them to our holy faith; and ordered that I should not go by land to the east, by which it is the custom to go, but by a voyage to the west, by which course, unto the present time, we do not know for certain that any one hath passed. Your highnesses, therefore, after having expelled all the Jews from your kingdoms and territories, commanded me, in the same month of January, to proceed with a sufficient armament to the said parts of India; and for this purpose bestowed great favours upon me, ennobling me, that thenceforward I might style myself Don, and ap-

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pointing me high admiral of the Ocean sea, and perpetual viceroy and governor of all the islands and continents I should discover and gain, and which henceforward may be discovered and gained in the Ocean sea; and that my eldest son should succeed me, and so on from generation to generation for ever. I departed, therefore, from the city of Granada, on Saturday the 12th of May, of the same year 1492, to Palos, a seaport, where I armed three ships, well calculated for such service, and sailed from that port well furnished with provisions and with many seamen, on Friday the 3d of August, of the same year, half an hour before sunrise, and took the route for the Canary islands of your highnesses, to lay my course thence, and navigate until I should arrive at the Indias, and deliver the embassy of your highnesses to those princes, and accomplish that which you had commanded. For this purpose I intend to write during this voyage, very punctually from day to day, all that I may do, and see, and experience, as will hereafter be seen. Also, my sovereign princes, beside describing each night all that has occurred in the day, and in the day the navigation of the night, I propose to make a chart, in which I will set down the waters and lands of the Ocean sea in their proper situations under their bearings; and further, to compose a book, and illustrate the whole in picture by latitude from the equinoctial, and longitude from the west; and upon the whole it will be essential that I should forget sleep and attend closely to the navigation to accomplish these things, which will be a great labour*."

Thus are formally and expressly stated by Columbus the objects of this extraordinary voyage. The material facts

* Navarrete, Collec. Viag. T. 1, p. 1.

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still extant of his journal will be found incorporated in the present work*.

As a guide by which to sail, he had prepared a map or chart, improved upon that sent him by Paolo Toscanelli. Neither of those now exist, but the globe or planisphere finished by Martin Behem in this year of the admiral's first voyage is still extant, and furnishes an idea of what the chart of Columbus must have been. It exhibits the coasts of Europe and Africa from the south of Ireland to the end of Guinea, and opposite to them, on the other side of the Atlantic, the extremity of Asia, or as it was termed, India. Between them is placed the island of Cipango, or Japan, which, according to Marco Polo, lay fifteen hundred miles distant from the Asiatic coast. In his computations Columbus advanced this island about a thousand leagues too much to the

* An abstract of this journal, made by Las Casas, has recently been discovered, and is published in the first volume of the collection of Señ. Navarrete. Many passages of this abstract had been previously inserted by Las Casas in his History of the Indias, and the same journal had been copiously used by Fernando Columbus in the history of his father. In the present account of this voyage, the author has made use of the journal contained in the work of Señor Navarrete, the manuscript history of Las Casas, the History of the Indias by Herrera, the Life of the Admiral by his son, the Chronicle of the Indias by Oviedo, the manuscript history of Ferdinand and Isabella by Andrez Bernaldez, curate of Los Palacios, and the Letters, and Decades of the Ocean sea, by Peter Martyr; all of whom, with the exception of Herrera, were contemporaries and acquaintances of Columbus. These are the principal authorities which have been consulted, though scattered lights have occasionally been obtained from other sources.

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east, supposing it to be about in the situation of Florida*; and at this island he hoped first to arrive.

The exultation of Columbus at finding himself, after so many years of baffled hope, at length fairly launched on his grand enterprize, was checked by his want of confidence in the resolution and perseverance of his crews. As long as he remained within reach of Europe there was no security that, in a moment of repentance and alarm, they might not unanimously renounce the prosecution of the voyage, and insist on a return. Symptoms soon appeared to warrant his apprehensions. On the third day, the Pinta made signal of distress. Her rudder was discovered to be broken, and unhung. This Columbus surmised to be done through the contrivance of the owners of the caravel, Gomez Rascon and Christoval Quintero, to disable their vessel, and cause her to be left behind. As has already been observed, they had been pressed into the service greatly against their will, and their caravel seized upon for the expedition, in conformity to the royal orders.

Columbus was much disturbed at this occurrence. It gave him a foretaste of further difficulties to be apprehended from crews partly enlisted on compulsion, and all full of doubt and foreboding. Trivial obstacles might in the present critical stage of his voyage, spread panic and mutiny through his ships, and entirely defeat the purpose of the expedition.

The wind was blowing strongly at the time, so that he could not render assistance without endangering his own vessel. Fortunately, Martin Alonzo Pinzon commanded the Pinta; and being an adroit and able seaman, he succeeded in securing the rudder with cords, so as to bring the vessel

* Malte-Brun, Geograph. Universelle, T. 2, p. 283.

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into management. This, however, was but a temporary and inadequate expedient: the fastenings gave way again on the following day, and the other ships were obliged to shorten sail until the rudder could be secured.

This damaged state of the Pinta, as well as her being in a leaky condition, determined the admiral to touch at the Canary islands, and seek a vessel to replace her. He considered himself not far from those islands, though a different opinion was entertained by the pilots of the squadron. The event proved his superiority in taking observations and keeping reckonings, for they came in sight of the Canaries on the morning of the 9th.

They were detained upwards of three weeks among these islands, seeking in vain to find another vessel. They were obliged, therefore, to make a new rudder for the Pinta, and repair her as well as they were able for the voyage. The lateen sails of the Niña were also altered into square sails, that she might work more steadily and securely, and be able to keep company with the other vessels. While sailing among these islands, they passed in sight of Teneriffe, whose lofty peak was sending out volumes of flame and smoke. The crew were terrified at sight of this eruption, being ready to take alarm at any extraordinary phenomenon, and to construe it into a disastrous portent. Columbus took great pains to dispel their apprehensions, explaining the natural causes of those volcanic fires, and verifying his explanations by citing Mount Etna, and other well known volcanoes.

While taking in wood, water and provisions, in the island of Gomera, a vessel arrived from Ferro, which reported that three Portuguese caravels had been seen hovering off that island, with the intention, it was said, of capturing Columbus. The admiral suspected some hostile stratagem on the part of the king of Portugal, in revenge for his having em-

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barked in the service of Spain; he therefore lost no time in putting to sea, anxious to get far from those islands, and out of the track of navigation, trembling lest something might occur to defeat his expedition, commenced under such inauspicious circumstances.

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CHAPTER II.

CONTINUATION OF THE VOYAGE—FIRST NOTICE OF THE VARIATION OF THE NEEDLE.

1492. EARLY in the morning of the sixth of September, Columbus set sail from the island of Gomera, and now might be said first to strike into the region of discovery; taking leave of these frontier islands of the old world, and steering westward for the unknown parts of the Atlantic. For three days, however, a profound calm kept the vessels loitering with flagging sails, within a short distance of the land. This was a tantalizing delay to Columbus, who was impatient to find himself launched far upon the ocean, out of sight of either land or sail; which in the pure atmospheres of these latitudes may be descried at an immense distance. On the following Sunday, the 9th of September, at day-break, he beheld Ferro, the last of the Canary islands, about nine leagues distant. This was the island from whence the Portuguese caravels had been seen; he was therefore in the very neighbourhood of danger. Fortunately a breeze sprang up with the sun, their flagging sails were once more filled, and in the course of the day the heights of Ferro gradually faded from the horizon.

On losing sight of this last trace of land, the hearts of the crews failed them. They seemed literally to have taken leave of the world. Behind them was every thing dear to the heart of man; country, family, friends, life itself: before them every thing was chaos, mystery, and peril. In the per-

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turbation of the moment, they despaired of ever more seeing their homes. Many of the rugged seamen shed tears, and some broke into loud lamentations. The admiral tried in every way to soothe their distress, and to inspire them with his own glorious anticipations. He described to them the magnificent countries to which he was about to conduct them: the islands of the Indian seas teeming with gold and precious stones; the regions of Mangi and Cathay, with their cities of unrivalled wealth and splendour.* He promised them land and riches, and every thing that could arouse their cupidity, or inflame their imaginations. Nor were these promises made for purposes of mere deception; Columbus certainly believed that he should realize them all.

He now issued orders to the commanders of the other vessels, that, in the event of separation by any accident, they should continue directly westward, but that after sailing seven hundred leagues they should lay by from midnight until daylight, as at about that distance he confidently expected to find land. In the meantime, as he thought it possible he might not discover land within the distance thus assigned, and as he foresaw that the vague terrors already awakened among the seamen would increase with the space which intervened between them and their homes, he commenced a stratagem which he continued throughout the voyage. He kept two reckonings: one correct, in which the true way of the ship was noted, and which was retained in secret for his own government: in the other, which was open to general inspection, a number of leagues was daily subtracted from the sailing of the ship, so that the crews were kept in ignorance of the real distance they had advanced*.

* It has been erroneously stated that Columbus kept two journals. It was merely in the reckoning, or log-book, that he de-

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On the 11th of September, when about one hundred and fifty leagues west of Ferro, they fell in with a part of a mast, which from its size appeared to have belonged to a vessel of about a hundred and twenty tons burthen; and which had evidently been a long time in the water. The crews, tremblingly alive to every thing that could excite their hopes or fears, looked with rueful eye upon this wreck of some unfortunate voyager, drifting ominously at the entrance of those unknown seas.

On the 13th of September, in the evening, being about two hundred leagues from the island of Ferro, Columbus for the first time noticed the variation of the needle; a phenomenon which had never before been remarked. He perceived about nightfall, that the needle, instead of pointing to the north star, varied about half a point, or between five and six degrees, to the northwest, and still more on the following morning. Struck with this circumstance, he observed it attentively for three days, and found that the variation increased as he advanced. He at first made no mention of this phenomenon, knowing how ready his people were to take alarm, but it soon attracted the attention of the pilots, and filled them with consternation. It seemed as if the very laws of nature were changing as they advanced, and that they were entering another world, subject to unknown influences*. They apprehended that the compass was about to

ceived the crew. His journal was entirely private, and intended for his own use and the perusal of the sovereigns. In a letter written from Granada, in 1503, to Pope Alexander VII. he says that he had kept an account of his voyages, in the style of the Commentaries of Cæsar, which he intended to submit to his holiness.

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind. L. 1. C. 6.

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lose its mysterious virtues, and without this guide, what was to become of them in a vast and trackless ocean?

Columbus tasked his science and ingenuity for reasons with which to allay their terror. He observed that the direction of the needle was not to the polar star, but to some fixed and invisible point. The variation, therefore, was not caused by any fallacy in the compass, but by the movement of the north star itself, which, like the other heavenly bodies, had its changes and revolutions, and every day described a circle round the pole. The high opinion which the pilots entertained of Columbus as a profound astronomer, gave weight to this theory, and their alarm subsided. As yet the solar system of Copernicus was unknown: the explanation of Columbus, therefore, was highly plausible and ingenious, and it shows the vivacity of his mind, ever ready to meet the emergency of the moment. The theory may at first have been advanced merely to satisfy the minds of others, but Columbus appears subsequently to have remained satisfied with it himself. The phenomenon has now become familiar to us, but we still continue ignorant of its cause. It is one of those mysteries of nature, open to daily observation and experiment, and apparently simple from their familiarity, but which on investigation make the human mind conscious of its limits; baffling the experience of the practical, and humbling the pride of science.

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CHAPTER III.

CONTINUATION OF THE VOYAGE—VARIOUS TERRORS OF THE SEAMEN.

1492. On the 14th of September, the voyagers were rejoiced by the sight of what they considered harbingers of land. A heron and a tropical bird called the Rabo de Junco*, hovered about the ships, neither of which are supposed to venture far to sea. On the following night they were struck with awe at beholding a meteor, or as Columbus calls it in his journal, a great flame of fire, which seemed to fall from the sky into the sea, about four or five leagues distant. These meteors, common in warm climates, and especially under the tropics, are always seen in the serene azure sky of those latitudes, falling as it were from the heavens, but never beneath a cloud. In the transparent atmosphere of one of those beautiful nights, where every star shines with the purest lustre, they often leave a luminous train behind them which lasts for twelve or fifteen seconds, and may well be compared to a flame.

The wind had hitherto been favourable, with occasional though transient clouds and showers. They had made great progress each day, though Columbus, according to his secret plan, contrived to suppress several leagues in the daily reckoning left open to the crew.

* The water-wagtail.

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They had now arrived within the influence of the trade wind, which following the sun, blows steadily from east to west between the tropics, and sweeps over a few adjoining degrees of the ocean*. With this propitious breeze directly aft, they were wafted gently but speedily over a tranquil sea, so that for many days they did not shift a sail. Columbus perpetually recurs to the bland and temperate serenity of the weather, which in this tract of the ocean is soft and refreshing without being cool. In his artless and expressive language he compares the pure and balmy mornings to those of April in Andalusia, and observes that they wanted but the song of the nightingale to complete the illusion. "He had reason to say so," observes the venerable Las Casas, "for it is marvellous the suavity which we experience when half way towards these Indias; and the more the ships approach these lands so much more do they perceive the temperance and softness of the air, the clearness of the sky, and the amenity and fragrance sent forth from the groves and forests; much more certainly than in April in Andalusia†."

They now began to see large patches of herbs and weeds floating on the surface of the water, all drifting from the west, and increasing in quantity as they advanced. Some of these weeds were such as grow about rocks, others such as are produced in rivers; some were yellow and withered, others so green as to have apparently been recently washed from land. On one of these patches was a live crab, which Columbus carefully preserved. They saw also a white tropical bird of a kind which never sleeps upon the sea. Tunny fish also played about the ships, one of which was killed by the crew of the Niña. Columbus now called to mind the

* See Illustrations, article, "Winds."

† Las Casas, Hist. Ind. L. 1, C. 36, MS.

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account given by Aristotle of certain ships of Cadiz, which, coasting the shores outside of the straits of Gibraltar, were driven westward by an impetuous east wind, until they reached a certain part of the ocean where it was covered with vast fields of weeds, resembling sunken islands, and among which they beheld many tunny fish. He supposed himself arrived in this weedy sea, as it had been called, from which the ancient mariners had turned back in dismay, but which he regarded with animated hope, as indicating the vicinity of land. Not that he had any idea of yet reaching the object of his search, the eastern end of Asia, for according to his computation he had come but three hundred and sixty leagues* since leaving the Canary islands, and he placed the main land of India much farther on.

On the 18th of September the same weather continued; a soft steady breeze from the east filled every sail, while, to use the words of Columbus, the sea was as calm as the Guadalquivir at Seville. He had fancied that he perceived the water of the sea to grow fresher as he advanced, and he noticed this as a proof of the superior sweetness and purity of the air†.

The crews were all in high spirits, each ship striving to get in the advance, to catch the first sight of land. Alonzo Pinzon hailing the admiral from the Pinta, informed him that from the flight of a great number of birds which he had seen, and from certain indications in the northern horizon, he thought there was land in that direction. As his vessel was a fast sailer, therefore, he crowded canvas and kept in the advance.

There was in fact a cloudiness in the north, such as often hangs over land; and at sunset it assumed such shapes and

* Of twenty to the degree of latitude, the unity of distance used throughout this work.

† Las Casas, Hist. Ind. L. 1, Cap. 36.



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masses that many fancied they beheld islands. There was a universal wish, therefore, to steer for that quarter. Columbus, however, was persuaded that they were mere illusions. Every one who has made a sea voyage must have witnessed the deceptions caused by clouds resting upon the horizon, especially about sunset and sunrise; which the eye, assisted by the imagination and desire, easily converts into the wished for land. This is particularly the case within the tropics, where the clouds at sunset assume the most singular appearances.

On the following day there were drizzling showers, unaccompanied by wind, which Columbus considered favourable signs; two pelicans also flew on board the ships, birds which he observed, seldom fly twenty leagues from land. He sounded, therefore, with a line of two hundred fathoms, but found no bottom. He supposed he might be passing between islands, which lay both to the north and south; but he was unwilling to waste the present favouring breeze by going in search of them; beside, he had confidently affirmed that land was to be found by keeping steadfastly to the west; his whole expedition had been founded on such a presumption; he should, therefore, risk all credit and authority with his people were he to appear to doubt and waver, and to go groping blindly from point to point of the compass. He resolved, therefore, to keep one bold course, always westward, until he should reach the coast of India; and afterwards, if adviseable, to seek these islands on his return*.

Notwithstanding the precaution which had been taken to keep the people ignorant of the distance they had sailed, they were now growing extremely uneasy at the length of

* Hist. del Almirante, Cap. 20. Extracts from journal of Columb. Navarrete, T. 1.

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the voyage. They had advanced much further west than ever man had sailed before, and though already beyond the reach of succour, still they continued daily leaving vast tracts of ocean behind them, and pressing onward and onward into that apparently boundless abyss. It is true, they had been flattered by various indications of land, and still others were occurring; but all mocked them with vain hopes; after being hailed with a transient joy they passed away, one after another, and the same interminable expanse of sea and sky continued to extend before them. Even the favourable wind, which seemed as if providentially sent to waft them to the new world, with such bland and gentle breezes, was now conjured by their ingenious fears into a singular cause of alarm; for they began to imagine that the wind, in these seas, always prevailed from the east, and if so, would never permit them to return to Spain.

Columbus endeavoured in every way to soothe these rising fears, sometimes by argument and expostulation, sometimes by awakening fresh hopes, and pointing out new signs of land. On the twentieth of September, the wind veered with light breezes from the southwest. These, though adverse to their progress, had a cheering effect upon the people, as they proved that the wind did not always prevail from the east*. Several birds also visited the ships, three of which were of a small kind which keep about groves and orchards, and which came singing in the morning, and flew away again in the evening. Their song was wonderfully cheering to the hearts of the dismayed mariners, who hailed

* Mucho me fue necesario este viento contrario, porque mi gente andaban muy estimulados, que pensaban que no ventaban estos mares vientos para volver á Espana. Journal of Columb. Navarrete, T. 1. p .12.

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it as the voice of land. The larger fowl they observed were strong of wing, and might venture far to sea, but such small birds were too feeble to fly far, and their singing showed that they were not exhausted by their flight.

On the following day there was either a profound calm, or light winds from the southwest. The sea, as far as the eye could reach, was covered with weeds; a phenomenon, often observed in this part of the ocean, which has sometimes the appearance of a vast inundated meadow. This has been attributed to immense quantities of submarine plants, which grow at the bottom of the sea until ripe, when they are detached by the motion of the waves and currents, and rise to the surface*. These fields of weeds were at first regarded with great satisfaction, but at length they became, in many places, so dense and matted, as in some degree to impede the sailing of the ships, which must have been under very little headway. The crews, ever ready to conceive the most absurd alarm, now called to mind some tale about the frozen ocean, where ships were said to be sometimes fixed immoveable. They endeavoured, therefore, to avoid as much as possible these floating masses, lest some disaster of the kind might happen to themselves†. Others considered these weeds as proof that the sea was growing shallower, and began to talk of lurking rocks, and shoals, and treacherous quicksands; and of the danger of running aground, as it were, in the midst of the ocean, where their vessels might rot and fall to pieces, far out of the track of human aid, and without any shore where the crews might take refuge. They had evidently some confused notion of the ancient story of the sunken island of Atalantis, and feared that,

* Humboldt, Personal Narrative, Book 1. C. 1.

† Hist. del Almirante, Cap. 18.

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they were arriving at that part of the ocean where navigation was said to be obstructed by drowned lands, and the ruins of an engulphed country.

To dispel these fears, the admiral had frequent recourse to the lead, but though he sounded with a deep-sea line, he still found no bottom. The minds of the crews however had gradually become diseased. They were full of vague terrors and superstitious fancies; they construed every thing into a cause of alarm, and harassed their commander by incessant murmurs.

For three days there was a continuance of light summer airs from the southward and westward, and the sea was as smooth as a mirror. A whale was seen heaving up its huge form at a distance, which Columbus immediately pointed out as a favourable indication, affirming that these fish were generally in the neighbourhood of land. The crews, however, became uneasy at the calmness of the weather. They observed that the contrary winds which they experienced were transient and unsteady, and so light as not to ruffle the surface of the sea, which maintained a sluggish calm like a lake of dead water. Every thing differed, they said, in these strange regions from the world to which they had been accustomed. The only winds which prevailed with any constancy and force, were from the east, and they had not power to disturb the torpid stillness of the ocean; there was a risk, therefore, either of perishing amidst stagnant and shoreless waters, or of being prevented by contrary winds from ever returning to their native country.

Columbus continued with admirable patience to reason with these absurd fancies; observing that the calmness of the sea must undoubtedly be caused by the vicinity of land in the quarter from whence the wind blew, which, therefore, had not space sufficient to act upon the surface, and to heave up

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large waves. There is nothing, however, that renders men so deaf to reason as the influence of terror, which multiplies and varies the forms of ideal danger, a thousand times faster than the most active wisdom can dispel them. The more Columbus argued, the more boisterous became the murmurs of his crew, until, on Sunday the 25th of September, there came on a heavy swell of the sea, unaccompanied by wind. This is a phenomenon that often occurs in the broad ocean, being either the expiring undulations of some past gale, or the movement given to the sea by some distant current of wind; it was, nevertheless, regarded with astonishment by the mariners, and dispelled the imaginary terrors occasioned by the calm.

Columbus, who as usual considered himself under the immediate eye and guardianship of heaven in this solemn enterprize, intimates in his journal that this swelling of the sea seemed providentially ordered to allay the rising clamours of his crew; comparing it to that which so miraculously aided Moses when conducting the children of Israel out of the captivity of Egypt*.

* "Como la mar estuviese mansa y llana murmuraba la gente diciendo que, pues por alli no habia mar grande que nunca ventaria para volver á España; pero despues alzóse mucho la mar y sin viento, que los asombraba; por lo cual dice aqui el Almirante; *asi que muy necesario me fué la mar alta, que no pareció, salvo el tiempo de los Judios cuando salieron de Egipto contra Moyses que los sacaba de captiverio.*" Journal of Columb. Navarrete, T. 1.

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CHAPTER IV.

CONTINUATION OF THE VOYAGE—DISCOVERY OF LAND.

1492. THE situation of Columbus was daily becoming more and more critical. In proportion as he approached the regions where he expected to find land, the impatience of his crews augmented. The favourable signs which had increased his confidence, were now derided by them as delusive; and there was danger of their rebelling, and obliging him to turn back, when on the point of realizing the object of all his labours. They beheld themselves with dismay still wafted onward, over the boundless wastes of what appeared to them a mere watery desert, surrounding the habitable world. What was to become of them should their provisions fail? Their ships were too weak and defective even for the great voyage they had already made; but if they were still to press forward, adding at every moment to the immense expanse which already divided them from land, how should they ever be able to return, having no port where they might victual and refit?

In this way they fed each others' discontents, gathering together in the retired parts of the ship, at first in little knots of two and three, which gradually increased and became formidable, joining together, and strengthening each other in mutinous opposition to the admiral. They exclaimed against him as an ambitious desperado, who in a mad phantasy had determined to do something extravagant to render

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himself notorious. What to him were their sufferings and dangers; when he was evidently content to sacrifice his own life for the chance of distinction! To continue on, in such a mad expedition, was to become the authors of their own destruction. What obligation bound them to persist; or when were the terms of their agreement to be considered as fulfilled? They had already sailed far beyond the limits that man had ventured before; they had penetrated into remote seas, untraversed by a sail. How much farther were they to go in quest of a mere imaginary land? Were they to sail on until they perished, or until all return became impossible? Who, on the other hand, would blame them, were they to consult their safety, and turn their course homewards, before it was yet too late? Would they not rather be extolled for their courage in having undertaken a similar enterprise, and their hardihood in persisting in it so far? As to any complaints which the admiral might make of their returning against his will, they would be without weight; for he was a foreigner, a man without friends or influence. His schemes had been condemned by the learned as idle and visionary, and had been discountenanced by people of all ranks. He had, therefore, no party on his side; but rather a large number whose pride of opinion would be gratified by his failure*.

Such are some of the reasonings by which these men prepared themselves for an open opposition to the prosecution of the voyage; and when we consider the natural fire of the Spanish character, impatient of control; and the peculiar nature of these crews, composed in a great part of men sail-

* Hist. del Almirante, C. 19. Herrera. Hist. Ind. Decad. 1, L. 1, C. 10.

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ing on compulsion; we may easily imagine the constant danger there was of open and desperate rebellion. Some there were who did not scruple at the most atrocious instigations. They proposed, as a mode of silencing all after complaints of the admiral, that should he refuse to turn back, they should throw him into the sea, and give out, on their arrival in Spain, that he had fallen overboard, while contemplating the stars, and the signs of the heavens, with his astronomical instruments. A report which no one would have either the inclination or the means to controvert*.

Columbus was not ignorant of these mutinous intentions, but he kept a serene and steady countenance; soothing some with gentle words, stimulating the pride or the avarice of others, and openly menacing the most refractory with signal punishment, should they do any thing to impede the voyage.

On the 25th of September, the wind again became favourable, and they were able to resume their course directly to the west. The airs being light, and the sea calm, the vessels sailed near to each other, and Columbus had much conversation with Martin Alonzo Pinzon, on the subject of a chart which the former had sent three days before on board of the Pinta. Pinzon thought that according to the indications of the map, they ought to be in the neighbourhood of Cipango, and the other islands which the admiral had therein delineated. Columbus partly entertained the same idea; but thought it possible that the ships might have been borne out of their track by the prevalent currents, or that they had not come so far as the pilots had reckoned. He desired that

* Hist. del Almirante, Cap. 19.

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the chart might be returned, and Pinzon, tying it to the end of a cord, flung it on board to him.

While Columbus, his pilot, and several of his experienced mariners were studying the map, and endeavouring to make out from it their actual position, they were aroused by a shout from the Pinta; and looking up beheld Martin Alonzo Pinzon mounted on the stern of his vessel, who cried with a loud voice, "Land! land! Señor, I claim my reward!" pointing at the same time to the southwest, where there was indeed an appearance of land at about twenty-five leagues distance. Upon this Columbus threw himself upon his knees and returned thanks to God, and Martin Alonzo repeated the *Gloria in excelsis*, in which he was loudly joined by his own crew and that of the admiral*.

The seamen now mounted to the mast head, or clambered about the rigging, and strained their eyes towards the southwest. All confirmed the assurance of land. The conviction became so strong, and the joy of the people so ungovernable, that Columbus found it necessary to vary from his usual course, and stand all night to the southwest. The morning light, however, put an end to all their hopes, as to a dream. The fancied land proved to be nothing but an evening cloud, and had vanished in the night. With dejected hearts they once more resumed their western course, from which Columbus would never have varied, but in compliance with their clamorous wishes.

For several days more they continued on with the same propitious breeze, tranquil sea, and mild delightful weather. The water was so calm that the sailors amused themselves with swimming about the vessels. Dolphins began to

* Journal of Columb. primer viage. Navarrete, T. 1.

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abound, and flying fish darting into the air fell upon the decks. The continued signs of land diverted the attention of the crews, and insensibly beguiled them onward.

On the first of October, according to the reckoning of the pilot of the admiral's ship, they had come five hundred and eighty leagues west, since leaving the Canary islands. The reckoning which Columbus showed the crew was five hundred and eighty-four; but the real reckoning which he kept privately was seven hundred and seven*. On the following day the weeds floated from east to west, and on the third day no birds were to be seen.

The crews now began to fear that they had passed between islands, from one to the other of which the birds had been flying: Columbus had also some doubts of the kind, but refused to alter his westward course. The people began again to utter murmurs and menaces; but on the following day they were visited by such flights of birds, and the various indications of land became so numerous, that from a state of despondency they passed into one of eager expectation.

A pension of thirty crowns† had been promised by the Spanish government to him who should first discover land. Eager to obtain this reward, the seamen were continually giving the cry of land, on the least appearance of the kind. To put a stop to these false alarms, which produced continual disappointments, Columbus declared that should any one give such notice, and land not be discovered within three days afterwards, he should thenceforth forfeit all claim to the reward.

* Navarrete, T. 1, p. 16.

† Equivalent to one hundred and seventeen dollars of the present day.

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On the evening of the 6th of October, Martin Alonzo Pinzon began to lose confidence in their present course, and proposed that they should stand more to the southward. Columbus still, however, refused, and continued towards the west*. Observing this difference of opinion in a person so important in his squadron as Alonzo Pinzon, and fearing that chance or design might scatter the ships, he ordered that, should either of the caravels be separated from him, it should stand to the west, and endeavour as soon as possible to join company again: directing, also, that the vessels should keep near to him at sunrise and sunset, as at these times the state of the atmosphere is most favourable to the discovery of distant land.

On the morning of the 7th of October, at sunrise, several of the admiral's crew thought they beheld land in the west, but so indistinctly that no one ventured to proclaim it, lest he should be mistaken, and forfeit all chance of the reward. The Niña, however, being a good sailer, pressed forward to ascertain the fact. In a little while, a flag was hoisted at her mast head, and a gun discharged, being the preconcerted signals for land. New joy was awakened throughout the little squadron, and every eye was turned to the west. As they advanced, however, their cloud-built hopes faded away, and before evening the fancied land had again melted into air†.

The crews now sank into a degree of dejection proportioned to their recent excitement; when new circumstances occurred to arouse them. Columbus having observed great flights

* Journal of Columb. Navarrete, T. 1, p. 17.

† Hist. del Almirante, Cap. 20. Journ. of Columb. Navarrete, T. 1.

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of small field birds going towards the southwest, concluded they must be secure of some neighbouring land, where they would find food and a resting place. He knew the importance which the Portuguese voyagers attached to the flight of birds; by following which they had discovered most of their islands. He had now come seven hundred and fifty leagues, the distance at which he had computed to find the island of Cipango; as there was no appearance of it, he might have missed it through some mistake in the latitude. He determined, therefore, on the evening of the 7th of October, to alter his course to the west-southwest, the direction in which the birds generally flew, and to continue that direction for at least two days. After all, it was no great deviation from his main course, and would meet the wishes of the Pinzons, as well as be inspiriting to his followers generally.

For three days they stood in this direction, and the farther they went the more frequent and encouraging were the signs of land. Flights of small birds of various colours, some of them such as sing in the fields, came flying about the ships, and then continued towards the southwest, and others were heard also flying by in the night. Tunny fish played about the smooth sea, and a heron, a pelican, and a duck, were seen all bound in the same direction. The herbage which floated by the ships was fresh and green, as if recently from land, and the air, Columbus observes, was sweet and fragrant as April breezes in Seville.

All these, however, were regarded by the crews as so many delusions, beguiling them on to destruction; and when on the evening of the third day they beheld the sun go down upon a shoreless horizon, they broke forth into clamorous turbulence. They exclaimed against this obstinacy in tempting fate, by continuing on into a boundless sea. They in-

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sisted upon turning homeward, and abandoning the voyage as hopeless. Columbus endeavoured to pacify them by gentle words and promises of large rewards, but finding that they only increased in clamour, he assumed a decided tone. He told them that it was useless to murmur; the expedition had been sent by the sovereigns to seek the Indias; and, happen what might, he was determined to persevere, until, by the blessing of God, he should accomplish the enterprise*.

* Hist. del Almirante, Cap. 20 Las Casas, Hist. Ind. L. 1. Journal of Columb. Navarrete, Collec. T. 1, p. 19.

Note.—It has been asserted by various historians, that Columbus, a day or two previous to coming in sight of the new world, capitulated with his mutinous crew, promising, if he did not discover land within three days, to abandon the voyage. There is no authority for such an assertion, either in the history of his son Fernando, or that of the Bishop Las Casas, each of whom had the admiral's papers before him. There is no mention of such a circumstance in the extracts made from the journal by Las Casas, which have recently been brought to light, nor is it asserted by either Peter Martyr or the curate of Los Palacios, both contemporaries and acquaintances of Columbus; and who could scarcely have failed to mention so striking a fact, if true. It rests merely upon the authority of Oviedo, who is of inferior credit to either of the authors above cited, and was grossly misled as to many of the particulars of this voyage, by a pilot of the name of Hernan Perez Matheos, who was hostile to Columbus. In the manuscript process of the memorable law-suit between Don Diego, son of the admiral, and the Fiscal of the crown, is the evidence of one Pedro de Bilbao, who testifies that he heard many times that some of the pilots and mariners wished to turn back, but that the admiral promised them presents, and entreated them to wait two or three days, before which time he should discover land. (Pedro de Bilbao oyo-

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Columbus was now at open defiance with his crew, and his situation became desperate. Fortunately, however, the

muchas veces que algunos pilotos y marineros querian volverse sino fuera por el Almirante que les prometio dones, les rogo esperasen dos o tres dias i que antes del termino descubriera tierra.) This, if true, implies no capitulation to relinquish the enterprize.

On the other hand, it was asserted by some of the witnesses in the above mentioned suit, that Columbus, after having proceeded some few hundred leagues without finding land, lost confidence, and wished to turn back, but was persuaded, and even piqued to continue on by the Pinzons. This assertion carries falsehood on its very face. It is in total contradiction to that persevering constancy and undaunted resolution displayed by Columbus, not merely in the present voyage, but from first to last, of his difficult and dangerous career. This testimony was given by some of the mutinous men of the crew, or the partisans of the Pinzons, anxious to exaggerate the merit of the latter, and to depreciate that of Columbus. Fortunately the extracts from the journal of the admiral, written from day to day with guileless simplicity and all the air of truth, disprove these fables, and show that on the very day previous to his discovery, he expressed a peremptory determination to persevere, in defiance of all dangers and difficulties.

It is worthy of remark, that, on the evening of the seventh of October, before Columbus changed his course to the west-south-west, he was, according to modern calculations, sailing along the twenty-sixth degree of north latitude, nearly due west. This would have taken him among the northern Lucayos or Bahama Islands, or rather, with the influence of the gulf stream, would have carried him at once to the eastern coast of Florida. Thus the whole course of Spanish discovery might have taken a direction along the Atlantic shores of North America, and a Spanish population have been given to the present territories of the United States.

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manifestations of neighbouring land were such on the following day, as no longer to admit a doubt. Beside a quantity of fresh weeds, such as grow in rivers, they saw a green fish of a kind which keeps about rocks; then a branch of thorn with berries on it, and recently separated from the tree, floated by them; then they picked up a reed, a small board, and above all, a staff artificially carved. All gloom and mutiny now gave way to sanguine expectation; and throughout the day each one was eagerly on the watch, in hopes of being the first to discover the long sought for land.

In the evening, when, according to invariable custom on board of the admiral's ship, the mariners had sung the *Salve Regina*, or vesper hymn to the virgin, he made an impressive address to his crew. He pointed out the goodness of God in thus conducting them by such soft and favouring breezes across a tranquil ocean, cheering their hopes continually with fresh signs, increasing as their fears augmented, and thus leading and guiding them to a promised land. He now reminded them of the orders he had given on leaving the Canaries, that after sailing westward seven hundred leagues they should not make sail after midnight. Present appearances authorized such a precaution. He thought it probable they should make land that very night: he ordered, therefore, a vigilant look out to be kept from the forecastle, promising, to whomsoever should make the discovery, a doublet of velvet, in addition to the pension to be given by the sovereigns*.

The breeze had been fresh all day, with more sea than usual, and they had made great progress. At sunset they

* Hist. del Almirante, C. 21.

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had stood again to the west, and were ploughing the waves at a rapid rate, the Pinta keeping the lead from her superior sailing. The greatest animation prevailed throughout the ships; not an eye was closed that night. As the evening darkened, Columbus took his station on the top of the castle or cabin on the high poop of his vessel. However he might carry a cheerful and confident countenance during the day, it was to him a time of the most painful anxiety, and now when he was wrapped by the shades of night from observation, he maintained an intense and unremitting watch, ranging his eye along the dusky horizon, in search of the most vague indication of land. Suddenly, about ten o'clock, he thought he beheld a light glimmering at a great distance. Fearing that his eager hopes might deceive him, he called to Pedro Gutierrez, gentleman of the king's bed-chamber, and demanded whether he saw a light in that direction. The latter replied in the affirmative. Columbus yet doubtful whether it might not be some delusion of the fancy, called Rodrigo Sanchez of Segovia, and made the same inquiry. By the time the latter had ascended the round house, the light had disappeared. They saw it once or twice afterwards in sudden and passing gleams; as if it were a torch in the bark of a fisherman, rising and sinking with the waves; or in the hand of some person on shore, borne up and down as he walked from house to house. So transient and uncertain were these gleams, that few attached any importance to them. Columbus, however, considered them as certain signs of land, and moreover that the land was inhabited.

They continued on their course until two in the morning, when a gun from the Pinta gave the joyful signal of land.

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It was first descried by a mariner named Rodrigo de Triana; but the reward was afterwards adjudged to the admiral, for having previously perceived the light. The land was now dimly seen about two leagues distant, whereupon they took in sail, and laid to, waiting impatiently for the dawn.

The thoughts and feelings of Columbus, in this little space of time, must have been tumultuous and intense. At length, in spite of every difficulty and danger, he had accomplished his object. The great mystery of the ocean was revealed. His theory, which had been the scoff even of sages, was triumphantly established. He had secured to himself a glory which must be as durable as the world itself.

It is difficult even for the imagination to conceive the feelings of such a man, at the moment of so sublime a discovery. What a bewildering crowd of conjectures must have thronged upon his mind, as to the land which lay before him, covered with darkness! That it was fruitful, was evident from the vegetables which floated from its shores. He thought too that he perceived in the balmy air the fragrance of aromatic groves. The moving light which he had beheld had proved that it was the residence of man. But what were its inhabitants? Were they like those of the other parts of the globe; or were they some strange and monstrous race, such as the imagination in those times was prone to give to all remote and unknown regions? Had he come upon some wild island far in the Indian sea; or was this the famed Cipango itself, the object of his golden fancies? A thousand speculations of the kind must have swarmed upon him, as, with his anxious crews, he waited for the night to pass away; wondering whether the morning light would

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reveal a savage wilderness, or dawn upon spicy groves, and glittering fanes, and gilded cities, and all the splendours of oriental civilization.

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LIFE AND VOYAGES

OF

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS.

BOOK IV.

CHAPTER I.

FIRST LANDING OF COLUMBUS IN THE NEW WORLD.

1492. It was on the morning of Friday, 12th October, 1492, that Columbus first beheld the new world. When the day dawned, he saw before him a level and beautiful island several léagues in extent, of great freshness and verdure, and covered with trees like a continual orchard. Though every thing appeared in the wild luxuriance of untamed nature, yet the island was evidently populous, for the inhabitants were seen issuing from the woods, and running from all parts to the shore, where they stood gazing at the ships. They were all perfectly naked, and from their attitudes and gestures appeared to be lost in astonishment. Columbus made signal for the ships to cast anchor, and the boats to be manned and armed. He entered his own boat richly attired in scarlet, and bearing the royal standard; whilst Martin Alonzo Pinzon, and Vincent Yañez his bro-

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ther, put off in company in their boats, each bearing the banner of the enterprize emblazoned with a green cross, having on each side the letters F. and Y. surmounted by crowns, the initials of the Castilian monarchs Fernando and Ysabel.

As they approached the shores, they were refreshed by the sight of the ample forests, which in those climates have extraordinary beauty of vegetation. They beheld fruits of tempting hue, but unknown kind, growing among the trees which overhung the shores. The purity and suavity of the atmosphere, the crystal transparency of the seas which bathe these islands, give them a wonderful beauty, and must have had their effect upon the susceptible feelings of Columbus. No sooner did he land, than he threw himself upon his knees, kissed the earth, and returned thanks to God with tears of joy. His example was followed by the rest, whose hearts indeed overflowed with the same feelings of gratitude. Columbus then rising drew his sword, displayed the royal standard, and assembling round him the two captains, with Rodrigo de Escobido, notary of the armament, Rodrigo Sanchez, and the rest who had landed, he took solemn possession in the name of the Castilian sovereigns, giving the island the name of San Salvador. Having complied with the requisite forms and ceremonies, he now called upon all present to take the oath of obedience to him, as admiral and viceroy, representing the persons of the sovereigns*.

* In the Tablas Chronologicas of Padre Claudio Clemente, is conserved a form of prayer, said to have been used by Columbus on this occasion, and which, by order of the Castilian sovereigns, was afterwards used by Balboa, Cortez and Pizarro in their discoveries. "Domine Deus æterne et omnipotens, sacro tuo verbo Cœlum, et terram et mare creasti; benedicatur et glorificetur no-

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The feelings of the crew now burst forth in the most extravagant transports. They had recently considered themselves devoted men, hurrying forward to destruction; they now looked upon themselves as favourites of fortune, and gave themselves up to the most unbounded joy. They thronged around the admiral in their overflowing zeal. Some embraced him, others kissed his hands. Those who had been most mutinous and turbulent during the voyage, were now most devoted and enthusiastic. Some begged favours of him, as of a man who had already wealth and honours in his gift. Many abject spirits, who had outraged him by their insolence, now crouched as it were at his feet, begging pardon for all the trouble they had caused him, and offering for the future the blindest obedience to his commands*.

The natives of the island, when, at the dawn of day they had beheld the ships, with their sails set, hovering on their coast, had supposed them some monsters which had issued from the deep during the night. They had crowded to the beach, and watched their movements with awful anxiety. Their veering about, apparently without effort; the shifting and furling of their sails, resembling huge wings, filled them with astonishment. When they beheld the boats approach the shore, and a number of strange beings clad in glittering steel, or raiment of various colours, landing upon the beach, they fled in affright to their woods. Finding, however, that there was no attempt to pursue, nor molest them, they gradually

men tuum, laudetur tua majestas, quæ dignata est per humilem servum tuum, ut ejus sacrum nomen agnoscatur, et prædicetur in hac altera mundi parte." Tab. Chron. de los Descub. Decad. 1. Valencia, 1689.

* Oviedo, L. 1, Cap. 6. Las Casas, Hist. Ind. L. 1, C. 40.

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recovered from their terror, and approached the Spaniards with great awe, frequently prostrating themselves on the earth, and making signs of adoration. During the ceremonies of taking possession, they remained gazing in timid admiration at the complexion, the beards, the shining armour, and splendid dresses of the Spaniards. The admiral particularly attracted their attention, from his commanding height, his air of authority, his dress of scarlet, and the deference which was paid him by his companions; all which pointed him out to be the commander*. When they had still further recovered from their fears, they approached the Spaniards, touched their beards, and examined their hands and faces, admiring their whiteness. Columbus, pleased with their simplicity, their gentleness, and the confidence they reposed in beings who must have appeared to them so strange and formidable, suffered their scrutiny with perfect acquiescence. The wondering savages were won by this benignity; they now supposed that the ships had sailed out of the crystal firmament which bounded their horizon, or that they had descended from above on their ample wings, and that these marvellous beings were inhabitants of the skies†.

The natives of the island were no less objects of curiosity to the Spaniards, differing as they did from any race of men they had ever seen. Their appearance gave no promise of either wealth or civilization, for they were entirely

* Las Casas, ubi sup.

† The idea that the white men came from heaven was universally entertained by the inhabitants of the new world. When, in the course of subsequent voyages, the Spaniards conversed with the Cacique Nicaragua, he inquired how they came down from the skies, whether flying, or whether they descended on clouds. Herrera, Decad. 3. L. 4. C. 5.

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naked, and painted with a variety of colours. With some it was confined merely to some part of the face, the nose, or around the eyes; with others it extended to the whole body, and gave them a wild and fantastic appearance. Their complexion was of a tawny or copper hue, and they were entirely destitute of beards. Their hair was not crisped like the recently discovered tribes of the African coast, under the same latitude, but straight and coarse, partly cut short above the ears, but some locks left long behind and falling upon their shoulders. Their features, though obscured and disfigured by paint, were agreeable; they had lofty foreheads and remarkably fine eyes. They were of moderate stature, and well shaped; most of them appeared to be under thirty years of age; there was but one female with them, quite young, naked like her companions, and beautifully formed.

As Columbus supposed himself to have landed on an island at the extremity of India, he called the natives by the general appellation of Indians, which was universally adopted, before the true nature of his discovery was known, and has ever since been extended to all the aboriginals of the new world.

The Spaniards soon discovered that these islanders were friendly and gentle in their dispositions, and extremely simple and artless. Their only arms were lances, hardened at the end by fire, or pointed with a flint, or the tooth or bone of a fish. There was no iron to be seen among them, nor did they appear acquainted with its properties; for when a drawn sword was presented to them, they unguardedly took it by the edge.

Columbus distributed among them coloured caps, glass beads, hawks' bells, and other trifles, such as the Portuguese were accustomed to trade with among the nations of the

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gold coast of Africa. These they received as inestimable gifts, hanging the beads round their necks, and being wonderfully delighted with their finery, and with the sound of the bells. The Spaniards remained all day on shore, refreshing themselves after their anxious voyage, amidst the beautiful groves of the island; they did not return to their ships until late in the evening, delighted with all that they had seen.

On the following morning, at break of day, the shore was thronged with the natives, who having lost all dread of what at first appeared to be monsters of the deep, came swimming off to the ships; others came in light barks which they called canoes, formed of a single tree, hollowed, and capable of holding from one man to the number of forty or fifty. These they managed dexterously with paddles, and if overturned, swam about in the water with perfect unconcern, as if in their natural element, righting their canoes with great facility, and bailing them with calabashes*.

They showed great eagerness to procure more of the toys and trinkets of the white men, not apparently from any idea of their intrinsic value, but because every thing from the hands of the strangers possessed a supernatural virtue in their eyes, as having been brought with them from heaven; they even picked up fragments of glass and earthenware as valuable prizes. They had but few objects to offer in return, except parrots, of which great numbers were domesticated among them, and cotton yarn, of which they had abundance, and would exchange large balls of five and twenty pounds weight for the merest trifle. They brought also cakes of a

* The calabashes of the Indians, which served the purposes of glass and earthen ware, supplying them with all sorts of domestic utensils, were produced on stately trees of the size of elms.

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kind of bread called cassava, which constituted a principal part of their food, and was afterwards an important article of provisions with the Spaniards. It was formed from a great root called yuca, which they cultivated in fields. This they cut into small morsels, which they grated or scraped and strained in a press, making it into a broad thin cake, which was afterwards dried hard, would keep for a long time, and had to be steeped in water when eaten. It was insipid but nourishing, though the water strained from it in the preparation was a deadly poison. There was another kind of yuca, destitute of this poisonous quality, which was eaten in the root, either boiled or roasted*.

The avarice of the discoverers was quickly excited by the sight of small ornaments of gold, which some of the natives wore in their noses. These the latter gladly exchanged for glass beads and hawks' bells; and both parties exulted in the bargain, no doubt admiring each others' simplicity. As gold, however, was an object of royal monopoly in all enterprizes of discovery, Columbus forbade any traffic in it without his express sanction; and he put the same prohibition on the traffic for cotton, reserving to the crown all trade for it, wherever it should be found in any quantity.

He inquired of the natives where this gold was procured. They answered him by signs, pointing to the south; and he understood them that in that quarter there was a king of great wealth, in so much that he was served in great vessels of wrought gold. He understood also that there was land to the south, the southwest, and the northwest; and that the people from the latter frequently proceeded to the southwest in quest of gold and precious stones, and in their way made descents upon the island, carrying off the inhabitants. Se-

* Acosta, Hist. Ind. L. 4, C. 17.

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veral of the natives showed him the scars of wounds, which they informed him they had received in battles with these invaders.

It is evident that a great part of this fancied intelligence was the mere construction of the hopes and wishes of Columbus; for he was under a spell of the imagination, which gave its own shapes and colours to every object. He was persuaded that he had arrived among those islands described by Marco Polo as lying opposite Cathay, in the Chinese sea, and he construed every thing to accord with the account given of those opulent regions. Thus, the enemies, which the natives spoke of as coming from the northwest, he concluded to be the people of the main land of Asia, the subjects of the Great Khan of Tartary, who were represented by the Venetian traveller as accustomed to make war upon the islands, and to enslave their inhabitants. The country to the south, abounding in gold, could be no other than the famous island of Cipango, and the king who was served out of vessels of gold, must be the monarch whose magnificent city and gorgeous palace covered with plates of gold, had been extolled in such splendid terms by Marco Polo.

The island where Columbus had thus for the first time set his foot upon the new world, was called by the natives Guanahani. It still retains the name of San Salvador, which he gave to it, though called by the English Cat Island*. The light which he had seen the evening previous to his making land, may have been on Wátling's island, which lies a few leagues to the east. San Salvador is one

* Some dispute having recently arisen as to the island on which Columbus first landed, the reader is referred for a discussion of this question to the illustration of this work, article, "First landing of Columbus."

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of the great cluster of the Lucayos or Bahama Islands, which stretch southeast and northwest, from the coast of Florida to Hispaniola, covering the northern coast of Cuba.

On the morning of the 14th of October the admiral set off at daybreak with the boats of the ships to reconnoitre the island, directing his course to the northeast. The coast was surrounded by a reef of rocks, within which there was depth of water and sufficient harbour to receive all the ships in Christendom. The entrance was very narrow; within there were several sand banks, but the water was as still as in a pool*.

The island appeared throughout to be well wooded, with streams of water, and a large lake in the centre. As the boats proceeded, they passed two or three villages, the inhabitants of which, men as well as women, ran to the shores, throwing themselves on the ground, lifting up their hands and eyes, either giving thanks to heaven, or worshipping the Spaniards as supernatural beings. They ran along parallel to the boats, calling after the Spaniards, and inviting them by signs to land, offering them various fruits and vessels of water. Finding however that the boats continued on their course, many of the Indians threw themselves into the sea and swam after them, and others followed in canoes. The admiral received them all with kindness and caresses, giving them glass beads and other trifles, which were received with transport as celestial presents, for the invariable idea of the savages was, that the white men had come from the skies.

In this way they pursued their course, until they came to a small peninsula, which in two or three days might be separated from the main land and surrounded with water, and which was therefore specified by Columbus as an excellent

* Primer viage de Colon. Navarrete. T. 1.

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situation for a fortress. On this there were six Indian cabins, surrounded by groves and gardens as beautiful as those of Castile. The sailors being wearied with rowing, and the island not appearing to the admiral of sufficient importance to induce colonization, he returned to the ships, taking seven of the natives with him, that they might acquire the Spanish language and serve as interpreters.

Having taken in a supply of wood and water, they left the island of San Salvador the same evening, the admiral being impatient to prosecute his discoveries, so satisfactorily commenced, and above all to arrive at the wealthy country to the south, which he flattered himself would prove the famous island of Cipango.

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CHAPTER II.

CRUISE AMONG THE BAHAMA ISLANDS.

1492. On leaving San Salvador, Columbus was at a loss which way to direct his course. He beheld a great number of beautiful islands, green and level and fertile, inviting him in different directions. The Indians on board of his vessel, intimated by signs that they were innumerable, well peopled, and at war with one another. They mentioned the names of above a hundred. Columbus immediately supposed that he had arrived among that Archipelago described by Marco Polo as stretching along the coast of Asia, and consisting of seven thousand four hundred and fifty-eight islands, abounding with spices and odoriferous trees.

Delighted with the idea, he selected the largest island in sight for his next visit; which appeared to be about five leagues distant, and where, he understood from his Indians, the natives were richer than those of San Salvador, wearing bracelets, and anklets, and other ornaments of massive gold.

The night coming on, Columbus ordered that the ships should lie to, as the navigation was difficult and dangerous among this group of unknown islands, and he feared to venture upon a strange coast in the dark. In the morning they again made sail, but met with counter currents, which delayed their progress, so that it was not until sundown that they anchored at the island. The next morning (16th) they

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went on shore, and Columbus took solemn possession; giving the island the name of Santa Maria de la Concepcion. The same scene occurred with the inhabitants as with those of San Salvador. They manifested the same astonishment and awe, the same gentleness and simplicity, and the same nakedness and absence of all wealth. Columbus looked in vain for bracelets and anklets of gold, or for any other precious articles; they had been either fictions of his Indian guides, or his own misinterpretations.

Finding that there was nothing in this island to induce delay, he returned on board, and prepared to make sail for another, and much larger one, which lay to the west. At this time one of the Indians of San Salvador, who was on board of the Niña, seeing himself about to be borne away by these strangers far from his home, plunged into the sea, and swam to a large canoe filled with natives. The boat of the caravel put off in pursuit, but the Indians skimmed the surface of the sea in their light bark with too much velocity to be overtaken, and reaching the land fled like wild deer to the woods. The sailors took the canoe as a prize, and returned on board of the caravel. Shortly afterwards a small canoe approached one of the ships, from a different part of the island, with a single Indian on board, who came to offer a ball of cotton in exchange for hawks' bells. As he paused when close to the vessel, and feared to enter, several sailors threw themselves into the sea and took him prisoner.

Columbus was extremely desirous of dispelling any terror and distrust that might have been awakened in the island by the pursuit of the fugitives, or by the Indian guide who had escaped, considering it of the utmost importance to conciliate the good will of the natives for the benefit of future voyagers. Having seen all that had passed from his station

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on the high poop of the vessel, he ordered the captive to be brought to him. The poor Indian was led trembling with fear, and humbly offered his ball of cotton as a gift. The admiral received him with the utmost benignity, and declining his offering, put a coloured cap upon his head, strings of green beads around his arms, and hawks' bells in his ears, then ordering him and his ball of cotton to be replaced in the canoe, dismissed him astonished and overjoyed. He ordered that the other canoe also which had been seized and which was fastened to the Niña should be cast loose, to be regained by its proprietors. When the Indian reached the shore, Columbus could see his countrymen thronging round him, examining and admiring his finery, and listening to his account of the kind treatment he had experienced.

Such were the gentle and sage precautions continually taken by Columbus, to impress the natives with a favourable opinion of the white men. Another instance of the kind occurred after his leaving the island of Conception, when he stood for the larger island, which lay several leagues to the west. When midway across the gulf which separated the two islands, they overtook a single Indian in a canoe. He had a mere morsel of cassava bread, and a calabash of water for his sea stores, and a little red paint, like dragon's blood, for his personal decoration when he should land. They found also a string of glass beads upon him, such as they had given to the natives of San Salvador, which showed that he had come from thence, and was probably passing from island to island, to give notice of the arrival of the ships. Columbus admired the hardihood of this simple navigator, making such an extensive voyage in so frail a bark. As the island was still distant, he ordered that both the Indian and his canoe should be taken on board, where he treated him with the greatest kindness, giving him bread

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and honey to eat, and wine to drink. The weather being very calm, they did not reach the island until too dark to anchor, through fear of cutting their cables with rocks. The sea about these islands was so transparent, that in the day time they could see the bottom and choose their ground; and so deep, that at two gunshot distance there was no anchorage. Hoisting out the canoe of their Indian voyager, therefore, and restoring to him all his effects, they sent him joyfully to shore, to prepare the natives for their arrival, while the ships lay to until morning.

The benevolent treatment of the poor Indian had the desired effect; the natives came in their canoes during the night, eager to see these wonderful and benignant strangers. They surrounded the ships, bringing whatever their island afforded, fruits and roots, and the pure water from their springs.

Columbus distributed trifling presents among them, and to those who came on board he gave sugar and honey.

Landing the next morning, he gave to this island the name of Fernandina, in honour of the king; it is the same at present called Exuma. The inhabitants were similar in every respect to those of the preceding islands, excepting that they appeared more ingenious and intelligent. Some of the women wore scanty coverings or aprons of cotton, and others had mantles of the same, but for the most part they were entirely naked. Their habitations were very simple, being in the form of a pavilion or high circular tent, constructed of branches of trees, of reeds and palm leaves. They were kept very clean and neat, and sheltered under beautiful and spreading trees. For beds, they had nets of cotton, extended from two posts, which they called hamacs, a name since adopted into universal use among seamen.

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In endeavouring to circumnavigate the island, within two leagues of the northwest cape, Columbus found a noble harbour, sufficient to hold a hundred ships, with two entrances formed by an island which lay in the mouth of it. Here, while the men had landed with the casks, in search of water, he refreshed himself under the shade of the groves, which he says were more beautiful than any he had ever beheld: "the country was as fresh and green as the month of May in Andalusia; the trees, the fruits, the herbs, the flowers, the very stones, for the most part, as different from those of Spain, as night from day*." The inhabitants gave the same proofs as the other islanders, of being totally unaccustomed to the sight of civilized man. They regarded the Spaniards with awe and admiration; approached them with propitiatory offerings of whatever their poverty or rather their simple and natural mode of life afforded; the fruits of their fields and groves, the cotton which was their article of greatest value, and their domesticated parrots. When the Spaniards landed in search of water, they took them to the coolest springs, the sweetest and freshest runs, filling their casks, rolling them to the boats, and seeking in every way to gratify their celestial visiters.

However this state of primeval poverty might have pleased the imagination of a poet, it was a source of continual disappointment to the Spaniards, whose avarice had been whetted to the quick by the scanty specimens of gold which they had met with; and by the information of golden islands continually given by the Indians.

Leaving Fernandina on the 19th of October, they steered to the southeast in quest of an island called Saometo, where Columbus understood, from the signs of the guides, that

* Primer viage de Colon. Navarrete, T. 1.

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there was a mine of gold, and a king who dwelt in a large city and possessed great treasures, wearing rich clothing and jewels of gold, and being sovereign of all the surrounding islands. They found the island, but neither the monarch nor the mine; either Columbus had misunderstood the natives, or they, measuring things by their own poverty, had exaggerated the paltry state and trivial ornaments of some savage chieftain. Columbus extols, however, the beauty of the island, to which he gave the name of his royal patroness, Isabella*. Delightful as were the others he had visited, he declares that this surpasses them all. Like those, it was covered with trees, and shrubs, and herbs, of unknown kind, and of rich tropical vegetation. The climate had the same soft temperature; the air was delicate and balmy; the land was higher, with a fine verdant hill: the coast of a fine sand, gently laved by transparent billows.

Columbus was enchanted by the lovely scenery of this island. "It seems," says he, "as if one would never desire to depart from hence. I know not where first to go, nor are my eyes ever weary of gazing on the beautiful verdure." At the southwest end of the island, he found fine lakes of fresh water, overhung with groves and surrounded by banks covered with herbage. Here he ordered all the casks of the ships to be filled. "Here are large lakes," says he in his journal, "and the groves about them are marvellous, and here and in all the island every thing is green, and the herbage as in April in Andalusia. The singing of the birds is such, that it seems as if one would never desire to depart hence. There are flocks of parrots which obscure the sun, and other birds large and small, of so many kinds, and so different from ours, that it is wonderful; and beside there are

* At present called Isla Larga, and Exumeta.

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trees of a thousand species, each having its particular fruit, and all of marvellous flavour, so that I am in the greatest trouble in the world not to know them, for I am very certain that they are each of great value. I shall bring home some of them as specimens, and also some of the herbs." Columbus was intent on discovering the drugs and spices of the east, and on approaching this island, had fancied he perceived in the air which came from it, the spicy odours said to be wafted from the islands of the Indian seas. "As I arrived at this cape," says he, "there came off a fragrance so good and soft of the flowers or trees of the land, that it was the sweetest thing in the world. I believe there are here many herbs and trees which would be of great price in Spain for tinctures, medicines and spices, but I know nothing of them, which gives me great pain*."

The fish which abounded in these seas partook of the novelty which characterized most of the objects in this new world. They rivalled the birds in the tropical brilliancy of their colours; the scales of some of them glancing back the rays of light like precious stones; as they sported about the ships, they flashed gleams of gold and silver through the clear waves, and the dolphins taken out of their element delighted the eye with the changes of colours ascribed in fable to the camelion.

No animals were seen in these islands, excepting lizards, the dogs already mentioned, a kind of coney or rabbit called utia by the natives, and guanas. This last was regarded with disgust and horror by the Spaniards, supposing it to be a fierce and noxious serpent; but it was found afterwards to be perfectly harmless, and esteemed a great delicacy by the Indians.

* Primer viage de Colon. Navarrete, T. 1.

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For several days Columbus hovered about this island, seeking in vain to find its imaginary monarch, or to establish a communication with him, until at length he reluctantly became convinced of his error. No sooner, however, did one delusion fade away, than another succeeded. In reply to the continual inquiries made by the Spaniards concerning the source from whence they procured their gold, the natives had uniformly pointed to the south. Columbus now began to gather information of an island which lay in that direction, and which was called Cuba, but all that he could collect concerning it from the signs of the natives, was coloured, and gilded, and exaggerated by his imagination. He understood it to be of great extent, abounding in gold, and pearl, and spices, and carrying on an extensive commerce in those precious articles; and that large merchant ships came to trade with its inhabitants.

Comparing these misinterpreted accounts with the coast of Asia, as laid down on his map, after the descriptions of Marco Polo, he concluded that this island must be Cipango, and that the merchant ships mentioned must be those of the Grand Khan, who maintained an extensive commerce in these seas. He formed his plan accordingly, determining to sail immediately for this island, and make himself acquainted with its ports, cities, and productions, for the purpose of establishing relations of traffic. He would then seek another great island called Bohio, of which the natives gave likewise marvellous accounts. His sojourn in those islands would depend upon the quantities of gold, spices, precious stones, and other objects of oriental trade which he should find there. After this he would proceed to the main land of India, which must be within ten days' sail, seek the city of Quinsai, which, according to Marco Polo, was one of the most magnificent capitals in the world; he would

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there deliver in person the letter of the Castilian sovereigns to the Grand Khan, and when he received his reply return triumphantly to Spain with this document to prove that he had accomplished the great object of his voyage*. Such was the splendid scheme with which Columbus fed his imagination, as he was about to leave the Bahamas in quest of the island of Cuba.

* Journal of Columbus. Navarrete, T. 1.

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CHAPTER III.

DISCOVERY AND COASTING OF CUBA.

1492. For several days the departure of Columbus was delayed by contrary winds, and calms attended by heavy showers, which last had prevailed, more or less, since his arrival among the islands. It was the season of the autumnal rains, which in those torrid climates succeed the parching heats of summer, commencing about the decrease of the August moon, and lasting until the month of November.

At length, at midnight, the commencement of October 24th, he set sail from the island of Isabella, but was nearly becalmed until mid-day; a gentle wind then sprang up, and, as he observes, began to blow most amorously. Every sail was spread, and he stood towards the west-southwest, the direction in which he was told the land of Cuba lay from Isabella. After three days' navigation, in the course of which he touched at a group of seven or eight small islands, which he called Islas de Arena, supposed to be the present Mucacas islands, and having crossed the Bahama bank and channel, he arrived, on the morning of the 28th October, in sight of the island of Cuba. The part which he first discovered is supposed to be the coast to the west of Nuevitas del Principe.

As he approached this noble island, he was struck with its magnitude, and the grandeur of its features; its high and

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airy mountains, which reminded him of those of Sicily; its fertile valleys, and long sweeping plains, watered by noble rivers; its stately forests; its bold promontories, and stretching head-lands, which melted away into the remotest distance. He anchored in a beautiful river, free from rocks or shoals, of transparent water, its banks overhung with trees. Here landing and taking possession of the island, he gave it the name of Juana, in honour of Prince Juan, and to the river the name of San Salvador.

On the arrival of the ships, two canoes had put off from the shore, but on seeing the boat approach, to sound the river for anchorage, they fled in affright. The admiral visited two cabins, abandoned by their terrified inhabitants. They contained but scanty effects; a few nets made of the fibres of the palm tree, hooks and harpoons of bone, and a few other fishing implements; and one of the same kind of dogs which he had met with on the smaller islands, which never bark. He ordered that nothing should be taken away or deranged, contenting himself with noting the manner and means of living of the inhabitants.

Returning to his boat, he proceeded for some distance up the river, more and more enchanted with the beauty of the country. The forests which covered each bank were of high and wide spreading trees; some bearing fruits, others flowers, while in some both fruit and flower were mingled, bespeaking a perpetual round of fertility; among them were many palms, but different from those of Spain and Africa: with the great leaves of these the natives thatched their cabins.

The continual eulogies made by Columbus on the beauty of nature were warranted by the kind of scenery he was beholding. There is a wonderful splendour, variety, and luxuriance, in the vegetation of these quick and ardent climates.

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The verdure of the groves, and the colours of the flowers and blossoms, derive a vividness to the eye from the transparent purity of the air, and the deep serenity of the azure heavens. The forests too are full of life; swarming with birds of brilliant plumage. Painted varieties of parrots and woodpeckers create a glitter amidst the verdure of the grove, and hummingbirds rove from flower to flower, resembling, as has well been said, animated particles of a rainbow. The scarlet flamingos too, seen sometimes through an opening of a forest in a distant savannah, have the appearance of soldiers drawn up in battalion, with an advanced scout on the alert, to give notice of approaching danger. Nor is the least beautiful part of animated nature the various tribes of insects that people every plant, displaying brilliant coats of mail, which sparkle to the eye like precious gems*.

Such is the splendour of animal and vegetable creation in these tropical regions, where an ardent sun imparts, in a manner, his own lustre to every object, and quickens nature into exuberant fecundity. The birds, in general, are not remarkable for their notes, for it has been observed that in the feathered race sweetness of song rarely accompanies brilliancy of plumage. Columbus remarks, however, that there were various kinds which sang sweetly among the trees, and he frequently deceived himself in fancying that he heard the voice of the nightingale, a bird unknown in these countries. He was, in fact, in a mood to see every thing through a fond and favouring medium. His heart was full even to overflowing, for he was enjoying the fulfilment of his hopes, and the hard earned but glorious reward of his toils and

* The ladies of Havana, on gala occasions, wear in their hair numbers of those insects, which have a brilliancy equal to rubies, sapphires, or diamonds.

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perils. Every thing around him was beheld with the enamoured and exulting eye of a discoverer, where triumph mingles with admiration; and it is difficult to conceive the rapturous state of his feelings, while thus exploring the charms of a virgin world, won by his enterprize and valour.

From his continual remarks on the beauty of the scenery, and from the pleasure which he evidently derived from rural sounds and objects, he appears to have been extremely open to those delicious influences, exercised over some spirits, by the graces and wonders of nature. He gives utterance to these feelings with characteristic enthusiasm, and at the same time with the artlessness and simplicity of diction of a child. When speaking of some lovely scene among the groves, or along the flowery shores of these favoured islands, he says, "one could live there for ever." Cuba broke upon him like an elysium. "It is the most beautiful island," he says, "that eyes ever beheld, full of excellent ports and profound rivers." The climate was more temperate here than in the other islands, the nights being neither hot nor cold, while the birds and grasshoppers sang all night long. Indeed, there is a beauty in a tropical night, in the depth of the dark blue sky, the lambent purity of the stars, and the resplendent clearness of the moon, that spreads over the rich landscape, and the balmy groves, a charm more touching than the splendour of the day.

In the sweet smell of the woods, and the odour of the flowers, which loaded every breeze, Columbus fancied he perceived the fragrance of oriental spices; and along the shores he found shells of the kind of oyster which produces pearls. From the grass growing to the very edge of the water, he inferred the peacefulness of the ocean which bathes these islands, never lashing the shore with angry surges. Ever since his arrival among these Antilles, he had

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experienced nothing but soft and gentle weather, and he concluded that a perpetual serenity reigned over these happy seas. He was little suspicious of the occasional bursts of fury to which they are liable. Charlevoix, speaking from actual observation, remarks: "the sea of those islands is commonly more tranquil than ours; but like certain people who are difficult to be moved, and whose transports of passion are as violent as they are rare, so when this sea becomes irritated it is terrible. It breaks all bounds, overflows the country, sweeps away all things that oppose it, and leaves frightful ravages behind, to mark the extent of its inundations. It is after these tempests, known by the name of hurricanes, that the shores are found covered with marine shells, which greatly surpass in lustre and beauty those of the European seas*." It is a singular fact, however, that the hurricanes, which almost annually devastate the Bahamas, and other islands in the immediate vicinity of Cuba, have been seldom known to extend their influence to this favoured land. It would seem as if the very elements were charmed into gentleness as they approach it.

In a kind of riot of the imagination, Columbus finds at every step something to corroborate the information he had received, or fancied he had received, from the natives. He has had conclusive proofs, as he thought, that Cuba possessed mines of gold, and groves of spices, and that the crystal waters of its shores abounded with pearls. He no longer doubted that it was the island of Cipango, and, weighing anchor, coasted along westward, in which direction, according to the signs of his interpreters, the magnificent city of its king was situated. In the course of his voyage, he landed occasionally, and visited several villages; particularly

* Charlevoix, Hist. St. Doming. L. 1, p. 20. Paris, 1730.

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one on the banks of a large river, to which he gave the name of Rio de Mares*. The houses were neatly built of branches of palm trees in the shape of pavilions; not laid out in regular streets, but scattered here and there, among the groves, and under the shade of broad spreading trees, like tents in a camp; as is still the case in many of the Spanish settlements, and in the villages in the interior of Cuba. The inhabitants fled to the mountains, or hid themselves in the woods. Columbus carefully noted the architecture and furniture of their dwellings. The houses were better built than those he had hitherto seen, and were kept extremely clean. He found in them rude statues, and wooden masks, carved with considerable ingenuity. All these were indications of more art and civilization than he had observed in the smaller islands, and he supposed they would go on increasing as he approached terra firma. Finding in all the cabins implements for fishing, he concluded that these coasts were inhabited merely by fishermen, who carried their fish to the cities in the interior. He thought also he had found the sculls of cows, which proved that there were cattle in the island; though these are supposed to have been sculls of the manati or sea-calf found on this coast.

After standing to the northwest for some distance, Columbus came in sight of a great head-land, to which, from the groves with which it was covered, he gave the name of the Cape of Palms, and which forms the eastern entrance to what is now known as Laguna de Moron. Here three Indians, natives of the island of Guanahani, who were on board of the Pinta, informed the commander, Martin Alonzo Pinzon, that behind this cape there was a river, from whence

* Now called Savannah la Mar.

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it was but four days' journey to Cubanacan, a place abounding in gold. By this they designated a province situated in the centre of Cuba, nacan in their language signifying the midst. Pinzon, however, had studied intently the map of Toscanelli, and had imbibed from Columbus all his ideas respecting the coast of Asia. He concluded, therefore, that the Indians were talking of Cublai Khan, the Tartar sovereign, and of certain parts of his dominions described by Marco Polo*. He thought he understood from them, that Cuba was not an island, but terra firma, extending a vast distance to the north, and that the king who reigned in this vicinity was at war with the great Khan.

This tissue of errors and misconceptions he immediately communicated to Columbus. It put an end to the delusion in which the admiral had hitherto indulged, that this was the island of Cipango; but it substituted another no less agreeable. He concluded that he must have reached the main land of Asia, or as he termed it, India, and if so, he could not be at any great distance from Mangi and Cathay, the ultimate destination of his voyage. The prince in question, who reigned over this neighbouring country, must be some oriental potentate of consequence; he resolved, therefore, to seek the river beyond the Cape of Palms, and dispatch a present to the monarch, with one of the letters of recommendation from the Castilian sovereigns; and after visiting his dominions, he would proceed to the capital of Cathay, the residence of the Grand Khan.

Every attempt to reach the river in question, however, proved ineffectual. Cape stretched beyond cape; there was no good anchorage; the wind became contrary, and

* Las Casas, lib. 1. cap. 44. MS.

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the appearance of the heavens threatening rough weather, he put back to a river where he had anchored a day or two before, and to which he had given the name of Rio de los Mares.

On the first of November, at sunrise, he sent the boats on shore to visit several houses, but the inhabitants fled to the woods. Columbus supposed that they must have a dread of his armament, thinking it one of the scouring expeditions sent by the Grand Khan to make prisoners and slaves. He sent the boat on shore again in the afternoon, with an Indian interpreter on board, who was instructed to assure the people of the peaceable and beneficent intentions of the Spaniards, and that they had no connexion with the Grand Khan. After the Indian had proclaimed this from the boat to the savages upon the beach, part of it no doubt to their great perplexity, he threw himself into the water and swam to shore. He was well received by the natives, and succeeded so effectually in calming their fears, that before evening there were more than sixteen canoes about the ships, bringing cotton yarn and the other simple articles of traffic of these islanders. Columbus forbade all trading for any thing but gold, that the natives might be tempted to produce the real riches of their country. They had none to offer, and were destitute of all ornaments of the precious metals, excepting one who wore in his nose a piece of wrought silver. Columbus understood this man to say that the king lived about the distance of four days' journey in the interior; that many messengers had been dispatched to give him tidings of the arrival of the strangers upon the coast; and that in less than three days' time messengers might be expected from him in return, and many merchants from the interior, to trade with the ships.

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It is curious to observe how ingeniously the imagination of Columbus deceived him at every step, and how he wove every thing into a uniform web of false conclusions. Poring over the map of Toscanelli, referring to the reckonings of his voyage, and musing on the misinterpreted words of the Indians, he imagined that he must be on the borders of Cathay, and about one hundred leagues from the capital of the Grand Khan. Anxious to arrive there, and to delay as little as possible in the territories of this inferior prince, he determined not to await the arrival of messengers and merchants, but to dispatch two envoys to seek the neighbouring monarch at his residence.

For this mission he chose two Spaniards, Rodrigo de Jerez and Luis de Torres; the latter a converted Jew, who knew Hebrew and Chaldaic, and even something of Arabic; one or other of which languages, Columbus supposed might be known to this oriental prince. Two Indians were sent with them as guides, one a native of Guanahani, and the other an inhabitant of the hamlet on the bank of the river. The ambassadors were furnished with strings of beads, and other trinkets for their travelling expenses. Instructions were given them to inform the king that Columbus had been sent by the Castilian sovereigns, a bearer of letters and a present, which he was to deliver personally, for the purpose of establishing an amicable intercourse between the powers. They were likewise instructed to inform themselves accurately about the situation and distances of certain provinces, ports and rivers, which the Admiral specified by name from the descriptions which he had of the coast of Asia. They were moreover provided with specimens of spices and drugs, for the purpose of ascertaining whether any precious articles of the kind abounded in the

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country. With these provisions and instructions, the ambassadors departed, six days being allowed them to go and return. Many at the present day will smile at this embassy to a naked savage chieftain in the interior of Cuba, in mistake for an Asiatic monarch; but such was the singular nature of this voyage, a continual series of golden dreams, and all interpreted by the delusive volume of Marco Polo.

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CHAPTER IV.

FURTHER COASTING OF CUBA.

WHILE awaiting the return of his ambassadors, the admiral ordered the ships to be careened and repaired. He employed himself also in collecting information concerning the country. On the day after their departure, he ascended the river in boats, for the distance of two leagues, until he came to fresh water. Here landing, he ascended a hill to command a prospect over the interior. His view, however, was shut in by thick and lofty forests, of the most wild but beautiful luxuriance. Among the trees were some which he considered to be the linaloes; many were odoriferous, and he doubted not possessed valuable aromatic qualities. There was a general eagerness among the voyagers to find the precious articles of commerce, which grow in the favoured climes of the east; and their imaginations were continually deceived by their hopes.

For two or three days the admiral was excited by reports of cinnamon trees, and nutmegs, and rhubarb, being found, but on examination they all proved fallacious. He showed the natives specimens of those and various other spices and drugs, which he had brought with him from Spain, and he understood from them that those articles were to be found in abundance to the southeast. He showed them gold and pearls also; whereupon several old Indians informed him that there was a country where the natives wore ornaments

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of them in their ears, and round the neck, arms, and ankles. They repeatedly mentioned the word Bohio, which Columbus supposed to be the name of the place in question, and that it was some rich district or island. They mingled however great extravagancies with their imperfect accounts, describing nations at a distance, who had but one eye; others who had the heads of dogs, and who were cannibals, cutting the throats of their prisoners and sucking their blood*.

All these reports of gold and pearls and spices, many of which were probably fabrications to please the admiral, tended to keep up the persuasion that he was among the valuable coasts and islands of the east. On making a fire to heat tar for careening the ships, the seamen found that the wood they burnt sent forth a powerful odour, and, on examining it, declared that it was mastic.

The wood abounded in the neighbouring forests, in so much that Columbus flattered himself a thousand quintals of this precious gum might be collected every year; and a more abundant supply procured than that furnished by Scios, and other islands of the Archipelago. In the course of their researches in the vegetable kingdom, in quest of the luxuries of commerce, they met with the potato, a humble root, little valued at the time, but a more precious acquisition to man than all the spices of the east.

On the 6th of November, the two ambassadors returned, and every one crowded to hear tidings of the interior of the country, and of the prince to whose capital they had been sent. After penetrating twelve leagues, they had come to a village of fifty houses, built similar to those of the coast, but larger; the whole village containing at least a thousand in-

* Primer viage de Colon. Navarrete, T. 1, p. 48.

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habitants. They were received with great solemnity; the natives conducted them to the best house, and placed them in what appeared to be intended for chairs of state, being wrought out of single pieces of wood, into the forms of quadrupeds. They then offered them the principal articles of their food, fruits and vegetables. When they had complied with the laws of savage courtesy and hospitality, they seated themselves on the ground around their visiters, and waited to hear what they had to communicate.

The Israelite Luis de Torres found his Hebrew, Chaldaic and Arabic of no avail, and the Lucayan interpreter had to be the orator. He made a regular speech, after the Indian manner, in which he extolled the power, the wealth and munificence of the white men. When he had finished, the Indians crowded round these wonderful beings, whom as usual they considered more than human. Some touched them, examining their skins and raiment, others kissed their hands and feet, in token of submission or adoration. In a little while the men withdrew, and were succeeded by the women, and the same ceremonies were repeated. Some of the women had a slight covering of netted cotton round the middle, but most of the inhabitants, of both sexes, were entirely naked. There seemed to be something like ranks and orders of society among them, and a chieftain who had some authority; whereas in all the natives they had previously met with among the islands, a complete equality had appeared to prevail.

Such were all the traces they found of the oriental city and court which they had anticipated. There was no appearance of gold, or other precious articles; and when they showed specimens of cinnamon, pepper, and other spices, the inhabitants told them those were not to be found in that neighbourhood, but far off to the southwest.

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The envoys determined, therefore, to return to the ships. The natives would fain have induced them to remain for several days, but seeing them bent on departing, a great number were anxious to accompany them, imagining they were about to return to the skies. They took with them, however, only one of the principal men, with his son, who were attended by a domestic.

On their way back, they for the first time witnessed the use of a weed, which the ingenious caprice of man has since converted into an universal luxury, in defiance of the opposition of the senses. They beheld several of the natives going about with firebrands in their hands, and certain dried herbs, which they rolled up in a leaf, and lighting one end, put the other end in their mouths, and continued exhaling and puffing out the smoke. These rolls they called tobaccos, a name since transferred to the plant of which they were made. The Spaniards were struck with astonishment at this singular indulgence, although prepared to meet with wonders*.

On their return to the ships they gave favourable accounts of the beauty and fertility of the country. They had met with many hamlets of four or five houses, well peopled, embowered among trees, laden with unknown fruits of tempting hue and delightful flavour. Around them were fields planted with the agi, or sweet pepper, with potatoes, with maize or Indian corn, and with a species of lupin or pulse. There were fields also of the yuca, of the roots of which they made their cassava bread. These, with the fruits of their groves, formed the principal food of the natives, who were extremely frugal and simple in their diet. There were vast quantities

* Primer viage de Colon. Navarrete, T. 1, p. 51. Las Casas, Hist. Ind. L. 1, C. 46.

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of cotton, some just sown, some in full growth, and some wrought into yarn, or into nets of which they made their hamacs; of this there was great store, both wrought and unwrought, in the houses. They had seen many birds of rare plumage, but of unknown species. Many ducks, several small partridges, and like Columbus, they had heard the song of a bird which they had mistaken for the nightingale. All that they had seen, however, betokened a primitive and simple state of society; for with all its beauty, the country was in a wild uncultivated state. The wonder with which they had been regarded, showed clearly that the people were strangers to civilized man, nor could they hear of any inland city superior to the one they had visited.

The report of the envoys put an end to many splendid fancies of Columbus about this barbaric prince and his capital. He was cruising, however, in a region of enchantment, over which his imagination exercised a magic power. As fast as one illusion passed away, another succeeded; for during the absence of the emissaries, the Indians had informed him by signs, of a place to the eastward, where the people collected gold along the river banks by torch light, and afterwards wrought it into bars with hammers. In speaking of this place, they again used the words Babeque and Bohio, which Columbus as usual supposed to be the proper names of islands or countries. The true meaning of these words has been variously explained. It is said that they were applied by the Indians to the coast of terra firma, called also by them Caritaba*. It is also said that Bohio means a house, and was often used by the Indians to signify the populousness of an island. Hence it was frequently applied to Hispaniola, as well as the more general name of

* Muñoz, Hist. N. Mundo, L. 3.

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Hayti, which means high land, and occasionally Quisqueya, (i. e. the whole) on account of its extent*. The misapprehension of these and other words was a source of perpetual error to Columbus. Sometimes he confounded Babeque and Bohio together, as if signifying the same island; sometimes they were different, and existing in different quarters; and Quisqueya he supposed must mean Quisai or Quinsai (i. e. the celestial city) of which, as has already been mentioned, he had received so magnificent an idea from the writings of the Venetian traveller.

The great object of Columbus was to arrive at some opulent and civilized country of the east, where he might establish a commercial relation with its sovereign, and carry home a quantity of oriental merchandise, as a rich trophy of his discovery. The season was advancing; the cool nights gave hints of approaching winter; he resolved therefore not to proceed farther to the north, nor to linger about uncivilized places, which at present he had not the means of colonizing. Conceiving himself to be on the eastern coast of Asia, he determined to turn to the east-southeast, in quest of Babeque, which he trusted might prove some rich and civilized island.

Before leaving the river, to which he had given the name of Rio de Mares, he took several of the natives to carry with him to Spain, for the purpose of teaching them the language, that on future voyages they might serve as interpreters. He took them of both sexes; having learned from the Portuguese discoverers, that the men always were more contented on the voyage, and serviceable on their return, when accompanied by females. In his own enthusiasm, and the religious temper of the day, he anticipated great triumphs to the faith,

* Muñoz, Hist. N. Mundo, L. 3.

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and glory to the crown, from the conversion of these savage nations, through the means of the natives thus instructed.

He imagined that the Indians had no system of religion; but a disposition to receive its impressions: as they looked on with great reverence and attention at the religious ceremonies of the Spaniards: soon repeating by rote any prayer that was taught them, and making the sign of the cross with the most edifying devotion. They had an idea of a future state, but limited and confused. It was difficult for mere savages to conceive an idea of pure spiritual existence and delight, separate from the joys of sense, or from those beautiful scenes which have been their favourite resorts while living. Peter Martyr, a contemporary of Columbus, mentions the idea of the Indians on this subject. "They confess the soul to be immortal; and having put off the bodily clothing, they imagine it goeth forth to the woods and the mountains, and that it liveth there perpetually in caves; nor do they exempt it from eating and drinking, but that it should be fed there. The answering voices heard from caves and hollows, which the Latins call echoes, they suppose to be the souls of the departed, wandering through those places*."

From the natural tendency to devotion which Columbus thought he discovered among these poor people, from their gentle natures, and their ignorance of all warlike arts, he pronounces it an easy matter to make them all devout members of the church, and loyal subjects of the crown. He concludes his speculations upon the advantages to be derived from the colonization of these parts, by anticipating a great trade there for gold, which must abound in the interior; for pearls and precious stones, of which, though he had seen none, he had received frequent accounts; for gums and

* Peter Martyr, Decad. 8, L. 9. M. Lok's translation. 1612.

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spices, of which he thought he had found indubitable traces; and for the cotton, which grew wild in vast quantities. Many of these articles, he observed, would probably find a nearer market than Spain, in the ports and cities of the Great Khan, at which he had no doubt of soon arriving*.

* Primer viage de Colon. Navarrete, T. 1.

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CHAPTER V.

SEARCH AFTER THE SUPPOSED ISLAND OF BABEQUE—DESERTION OF THE PINTA.

1492. On the 12th of November, Columbus turned his course to the east-southeast, to follow back the direction of the coast. This may be considered another critical change in his voyage, which had a great effect on his subsequent discoveries. He had proceeded far within what is called the old channel, between Cuba and the Bahamas. In two or three days more, he would have discovered his mistake in supposing Cuba a part of Terra Firma; an error in which he continued to the day of his death. He might have had intimation, also, of the vicinity of the continent, and have stood for the coast of Florida, or have been carried thither by the gulf stream; or, continuing along Cuba, where it bends to the southwest, might have struck over to the opposite coast of Yucatan, and have realized his most sanguine anticipations, in becoming the discoverer of Mexico. It was sufficient glory for Columbus, however, to have discovered a new world. Its more golden regions were reserved to give splendour to succeeding enterprizes.

He now ran along the coast for two or three days, without stopping to explore it. No populous towns or cities were to be seen, which if near the sea, would have been visible from the ships. Passing by a great cape, to which he gave the name of Cape Cuba, he struck eastward, to sea, in search of Babeque, but was soon obliged, on the 14th, to put back,

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in consequence of a head wind and boisterous sea. He anchored, therefore, in a deep and secure harbour, to which he gave the name of Puerto del Principe; and passed a few days, exploring with his boats an archipelago of small but beautiful islands in the vicinity, since known as *El Jardin del Rey*, or the king's garden. The gulf studded with these islands, he named the Sea of Nuestra Señora: in modern days it has been a lurking place for pirates, who have found secure shelter and concealment among the channels and solitary harbours of this archipelago. These islands were covered with noble trees, among which the Spaniards fancied they discovered mastic and aloes. Columbus supposed these, therefore, to be a part of the innumerable islands said to fringe the coast of Asia, and famed for abounding in spices. While at the Puerto del Principe, he elevated a cross in a lofty and conspicuous place adjacent to the harbour, his usual sign of having taken possession.

On the 19th he again put to sea, in almost a calm; but the wind springing from the eastward, he stood away off to the north-northeast, and at sundown was seven leagues distant from Puerto del Principe. Land was now descried directly east, about sixty miles distant, which from the signs of the natives he supposed to be the long desired island of Babeque. He continued all night to the northeast. On the following day, the wind continued contrary, blowing directly from the quarter to which he wished to steer. He was for some time within sight of the island of Isabella, but forbore to touch there, lest his Indian interpreters, who were from the island of Guanahani, only eight leagues from that of Isabella*, might desert; the poor savages keeping a wishful eye in the direction of their home.

* Journal of Columb. Navarrete, Collec. T. 1, p. 61.

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Finding the wind obstinately adverse, and the sea rough, Columbus at length put his ship about, to return to Cuba, making signals to his companions to do the same. The Pinta, however, commanded by Martin Alonzo Pinzon, had by this time gradually worked a considerable distance to the eastward. As he could speedily rejoin the other vessels with the wind astern, Columbus repeated his signals, but still they were unattended to. Night coming on, he shortened sail, and hoisted signal lights to the mast head, thinking that Pinzon would yet join him; but when morning dawned the Pinta was no longer to be seen*.

The fact was, that Pinzon had received extravagant accounts from one of the Indians on board of his caravel, of an island or region of great riches, to which he offered to guide him. His avarice was suddenly awakened. His vessel being the best sailer, he could easily ply to windward, while the others had to abandon the attempt. He might be the first, therefore, to discover this golden region, and enrich himself with its first fruits. He had long been impatient of the domination of the admiral, thinking himself entitled to an equality, from having contributed much of the funds for the expedition. He was a veteran navigator, the oracle of the maritime community of Palos, and accustomed from his wealth and standing to give the law among his nautical associates. He had ill brooked, therefore, being obliged to sail in a subordinate capacity on board of his own ship; and several disputes had occurred between him and the admiral. The sudden temptations offered to his avarice, added to his previous discontent, had been too powerful for his sense of duty. Forgetting what was due to the admiral,

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind. T. 1, C. 27. Hist. del Almirante, Cap. 29. Journal of Columbus. Navarrete, Collec. T. 1.

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as his commander, he had disregarded his signals, and keeping on to the eastward, with the advantage of his superior sailing, had gradually separated himself from the squadron.

Columbus was exceedingly indignant at this desertion. Independent of its being a flagrant example of insubordination, he suspected some sinister design. Either Pinzon intended to arrogate a separate command, and separate advantages, or to hasten back to Spain, and snatch the laurel of the discovery. The heavy sailing of his vessel, however, rendered all attempt to pursue him hopeless; he continued on therefore to Cuba, to finish the exploring of its coast.

On the 24th of November, he regained Point Cuba, and anchored in a fine harbour formed by the mouth of a river, to which he gave the name of St. Catharine. It was bordered by rich meadows, the neighbouring mountains were well wooded, there were pines tall enough to make masts for the finest ships, and noble oaks. In the bed of the river they found stones veined with gold.

Columbus continued for several days coasting the residue of Cuba, extolling in rapturous terms the magnificence, freshness, and verdure of the scenery; the purity of the rivers, and the number and commodiousness of its harbours. His description of one place, to which he gave the name of Puerto Santo, is a specimen of his vivid and artless feeling for the beauties of nature. "The amenity of this river, and the clearness of the water, through which the sand at the bottom may be seen; the multitude of palm trees of various forms, the highest and most beautiful that I have met with, and an infinity of other great and green trees; the birds in rich plumage, and the verdure of the fields, render this country, most serene princes, of such marvellous beauty, that it surpasses all others in charms and graces, as the day doth the night in lustre. For which reason I often say to my people,

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that, much as I endeavour to give a complete account of it to your majesties, my tongue cannot express the whole truth, nor my pen describe it; and I have been so overwhelmed at the sight of so much beauty, that I have not known how to relate it*."

The transparency of the water which Columbus attributed to the purity of the rivers, is the property of the ocean in these latitudes. So clear is the sea in the neighbourhood of some of these islands, that in still weather, the bottom may be seen as in a crystal fountain, and the inhabitants dive down four and five fathoms in search of conchs and other shell-fish, which are visible from the surface. The delicate airs, and pure waters of these islands, are among their greatest charms.

As a proof of the gigantic vegetation of these coasts, Columbus mentions the enormous size of the canoes formed from single trunks of trees. One that he saw was capable of containing one hundred and fifty persons. Among other articles found in the Indian dwellings was a cake of wax. Columbus took it to present to the Castilian sovereigns; "for where there is wax," said he, "there must be a thousand other good things†." It is since supposed to have been brought from Yucatan, as the inhabitants of Cuba were not accustomed to gather wax‡.

On the 5th of December, Columbus reached the eastern end of Cuba, which he supposed to be the eastern extremity of Asia, or, as he always termed it, India: he gave it therefore the name of Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. He was now greatly perplexed what course to take.

* Hist. del Almirante, Cap. 29.

† Journal of Columb. Navarrete, T. 1.

‡ Herrera, Hist. Ind. Decad. 1.

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He felt a desire to follow along the coast, as it bent off to the southwest, which might bring him to the more civilized and opulent parts of India. On the other hand, if he took this course, he must abandon all hope of finding the island of Babeque, which the Indians now said, lay to the northeast, and of which they still continued to give the most marvellous accounts. It was a state of embarrassment characteristic of this extraordinary voyage, to have a new and unknown world thus spread out to the choice of the explorer, where wonders and beauties invited him on every side, but where, whichever way he turned, he might leave the true region of profit and delight behind.

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CHAPTER VI.

DISCOVERY OF HISPANIOLA.

1492. On the 5th of December, while Columbus was steering at large beyond the eastern extremity of Cuba, undetermined what course to take, he descried land to the south-east, which gradually increased upon the view, its high mountains towering above the clear horizon, and giving evidence of an island of great extent. The Indians on beholding it exclaimed *Bohio*, the name by which Columbus understood them to designate some country which abounded in gold. When they saw him standing on in that direction, they showed great signs of terror, imploring him not to visit it, assuring him by signs that the inhabitants were fierce and cruel, that they had but one eye, and were cannibals. The wind being unfavourable, and the nights long, during which they did not dare to make sail in these unknown seas, they were a great part of two days working up to the island.

In the transparent atmosphere of the tropics, objects are descried at a great distance, and the purity of the air, and serenity of the deep blue sky, give a magical effect to scenery. Under these advantages, the beautiful island of Hayti revealed itself to the eye as they approached. Its mountains were higher and more rocky than those of the other islands; but the rocks reared themselves from among rich forests. The mountains swept down into luxuriant plains, and green savannahs, while the appearance of cultivated fields, with

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the numerous fires at night, and the columns of smoke which rose in various parts by day, all showed it to be populous. It rose before them in all the splendour of tropical vegetation, one of the most beautiful islands in the world, and doomed to be one of the most unfortunate.

In the evening of the sixth of December, Columbus entered a harbour at the western end of the island, to which he gave the name of St. Nicholas, by which it is called at the present day. The harbour was spacious and deep, surrounded with large trees, many of them laden with fruit; while a beautiful plain extended in front of the port, traversed by a fine stream of water. From the number of canoes seen in various parts, there were evidently large villages in the neighbourhood, but the natives had fled with terror at sight of the ships.

Leaving the harbour of St. Nicholas on the 7th, they coasted along the northern side of the island. It was lofty and mountainous, but with green savannahs and long sweeping plains. At one place they caught a view up a rich and smiling valley, that ran far into the interior, between two mountains, and appeared to be in a high state of cultivation.

For several days they were detained in a harbour which they called Port Conception; a small river emptied into it, after winding through a delightful country. The coast abounded with fish, some of which even leapt into their boats. They cast their nets, therefore, and caught great quantities, and among them several of kinds similar to those of Spain; the first fish they had met with resembling those of their own country. They heard also the notes of the bird which they mistook for the nightingale, and of several others to which they were accustomed. These, by the simple associations of idea which speak to the heart, reminded them strongly of the groves of their distant Andalusia. They

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fancied the features of the surrounding country resembled those of the more beautiful provinces of Spain, and in consequence of this idea, the admiral named the island Hispaniola.

There were traces of rude cultivation in the neighbourhood of the harbour, but the natives had abandoned the coast on their arrival. They at one time saw five lurking at a distance, who escaped on being approached. Columbus, desirous of establishing some intercourse, dispatched six men well armed into the interior. They found several cultivated fields, and traces of roads, and places where fires had been made, but the inhabitants had fled with terror to the mountains.

Though the whole country was solitary and deserted, Columbus consoled himself with the idea, that there must be populous towns in the interior, where the people had taken refuge, and that the fires he had beheld, had been signal fires, like those lighted up on the mountains in the old countries, in those times of Moorish war and sudden ravages of the seaboards, to warn the peasantry to fly from the coast.

On the 12th of December, Columbus, with great solemnity, erected a cross on a commanding eminence at the entrance of the harbour, in sign of having taken possession. As three sailors were rambling about the vicinity, they beheld a large number of the natives, who immediately took to flight, but the sailors pursued them, and with great difficulty succeeded in overtaking a young and handsome female, and brought their wild beauty in triumph to the ships. She was perfectly naked, which was a bad omen as to the civilization of the island, but an ornament of gold which she wore in the nose, gave hopes that the precious metals were to be found there. The admiral soon soothed her terrors by his kindness. He had her clothed, and made her presents of beads,

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brass rings, hawks' bells, and other trinkets, and sent her on shore, accompanied by several of the crew, and three of the Indian interpreters. So well pleased was this simple savage with her finery, and so won by the kind treatment she had experienced, that she would gladly have remained with the Indian women whom she found on board.

The party which had been sent with her returned on board late in the night, finding that her village was far distant, and fearing to venture inland. Confident of the favourable impression which the report given by the woman must produce, the admiral, on the following day, dispatched nine stout-hearted, well-armed men, to seek the village, accompanied by a native of Cuba, as an interpreter. They found the village about four and a half leagues to the southeast, situated in a fine valley on the banks of a beautiful river*. It contained one thousand houses, but all deserted, for they had beheld the inhabitants flying as they approached. The interpreter was sent after them, who with great difficulty quieted their terrors, assuring them of the goodness of these strangers, who had descended from the skies, and went about the world making precious and beautiful presents. Thus assured, the natives ventured back, to the number of two thousand. They approached the nine Spaniards with slow and trembling steps, often pausing and putting their hands upon their heads, in token of profound reverence and submission. They were a well formed race, fairer and handsomer than the natives of the other islands†.

* This village was formerly known by the name of *Gros Morne*, situated on the banks of the river of three rivers, which empties itself half a mile west of Port de Paix. Navarrete, T. 1.

† Las Casas, Lib. 1. Cap. 53. MS.

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While the Spaniards were conversing with them by means of their interpreter, they beheld another multitude approaching. These were headed by the husband of the female Indian who had been entertained on board of the ships the preceding evening. They brought her in triumph on their shoulders, and the husband was profuse in his gratitude for the kindness with which she had been treated, and the magnificent presents which had been bestowed upon her.

The Indians having now become more familiar with the Spaniards, and having in some measure recovered from their extreme fear, conducted them to their houses, and set before them cassava bread, fish, roots, and fruit of various kinds. Learning from the interpreter that the Spaniards were fond of parrots, they brought great numbers of them which they had domesticated, and indeed offered freely whatever they possessed: such was the frank hospitality which reigned throughout the island, where as yet the passion of avarice was unknown.

The great river which flowed through this valley was bordered with noble forests, among which were palms, bananas, and many trees covered with fruit and flowers. The air was mild as in April; the birds sang all day long, and some were even heard in the night. The Spaniards had not learnt as yet to account for the difference of seasons in this opposite part of the globe; they were astonished to hear the voice of this supposed nightingale singing in the midst of December, and co sidered it a proof that there was no winter in this happy climate. They returned to the ships enraptured with the beauty of the country; surpassing, as they said, even the luxuriant plains of Cordova. All that they complained of was that they saw no signs of riches among the natives.

And here it is impossible to refrain from dwelling on the picture given by the first discoverers, of the state of manners

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in this eventful island before the arrival of the white men. According to their accounts, the people of Hayti existed in that state of primitive and savage simplicity, which some philosophers have fondly pictured as the most enviable on earth. Surrounded by natural blessings, without even a knowledge of artificial wants. The fertile earth produced the chief part of their food almost without culture; their rivers and seacoast abounded with fish, and they caught the utia, the guana, and a variety of birds. This, to beings of their frugal and temperate habits, was great abundance; and what nature furnished thus spontaneously, they willingly shared with all the world. Hospitality, we are told, was with them a law of nature universally observed; there was no need of being known, to receive its succours, every house was as open to the stranger as his own*. Columbus too, in a letter to Luis de St. Angel, observes: "True it is, that after they felt confidence and lost their fear of us, they were so liberal with what they possessed, that it would not be believed by those who had not seen it. If any thing was asked of them they never said no; but rather gave it cheerfully, and showed as much amity as if they gave their very hearts; and whether the thing were of value or of little price, they were content with whatever was given in return. * * * In all these islands it appears to me that the men are all content with one wife, but they give twenty to their chieftain or king. The women seem to work more than the men; and I have not been able to understand whether they possess individual property; but rather think that whatever one has, all the rest share, especially in all articles of provisions†."

* Charlevoix, Hist. St. Doming. L. 1.

† Letter of Columb. to Luis de St. Angel. Navarrete, T.1. p. 167.

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One of the most pleasing descriptions of the inhabitants of this island is given by old Peter Martyr, who gathered it, as he says, from the conversations of the admiral himself.

"It is certain," says he, "that the land among these people is as common as the sun and water; and that 'mine and thine,' the seeds of all mischief, have no place with them. They are content with so little, that in so large a country they have rather superfluity than scarceness; so that they seem to live in the golden world, without toil, living in open gardens, not entrenched with dykes, divided with hedges, or defended with walls. They deal truly one with another, without laws, without books, and without judges. They take him for an evil and mischievous man, who taketh pleasure in doing hurt to another; and albeit they delight not in superfluities, yet they make provision for the increase of such roots whereof they make their bread, contented with such simple diet, whereby health is preserved and disease avoided*."

Much of this picture may be overcoloured by the imagination, but it is generally confirmed by contemporary historians. They all concur in representing the life of these islanders as approaching to the golden state of poetical felicity; living under the absolute, but patriarchal, and easy rule of their caciques, free from pride, with few wants, an abundant country, a happily tempered climate, and a natural disposition to careless and indolent enjoyment.

* P. Martyr, Decad. 1. Lib. 3. Translat. of Rich'd Eden, 1555.

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CHAPTER VII.

COASTING OF HISPANIOLA.

1492. WHEN the weather became favourable, Columbus made another attempt, on the 14th December, to find the island of Babeque, but was again baffled by adverse winds. In the course of this attempt he visited an island lying opposite to the harbour of Conception, to which, from its abounding in turtle, he gave the name of Tortugas. The natives had fled to the rocks and forests, and alarm fires blazed along the heights, from which circumstance he inferred that they were more subject to invasion than the other islanders. The country was so beautiful, that he gave to one of the valleys the name of Valle de Paraiso, or the Vale of Paradise, and called a fine stream the Guadalquiver, after that renowned river which flows through some of the fairest provinces of Spain. Setting sail on the 16th December, at midnight, Columbus steered again for Hispaniola. When half way across the gulf which separates the islands, he perceived a canoe navigated by a single Indian, and, as on a former occasion, was astonished at his hardihood in venturing so far from land in so frail a bark, and at his adroitness in keeping it above water, as the wind was fresh, and there was some sea running. He ordered both him and his canoe to be taken on board, and having anchored near a village on the coast of Hispaniola, at present known as

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Puerto de Paz, he sent him on shore, well regaled, and enriched with various presents.

In the early intercourse with these people kindness never seems to have failed in its effect. The favourable accounts given by this Indian, and by those with whom the Spaniards had communicated on their previous landings, dispelled the fears of the islanders. A friendly intercourse soon took place, and the ships were visited by a cacique of the neighbourhood. From this chieftain and his counsellors Columbus had further information of the island of Babeque, which was described as lying at no great distance. No mention is afterwards made of this island, nor does it appear that Columbus made any further attempt to seek it. No such island exists on the ancient charts, and it is probable that this was one of the numerous misinterpretations of Indian words, which led Columbus and others of the first discoverers into so many fruitless researches. The people of Hispaniola appeared handsomer to Columbus than any he had yet met with, and of a gentle and peaceable disposition; some of them had trifling ornaments of gold, which they readily gave away, or exchanged for any trifle. The country was finely diversified with lofty mountains, and fine valleys which stretched away inland as far as the eye could reach. The mountains were of such easy ascent, that the highest of them might be ploughed with oxen, and the luxuriant growth of the forests manifested the fertility of the soil. The valleys were watered by numerous clear and beautiful streams; they appeared to be cultivated in many places, and to be fitted for grain, for orchards and pasturage.

While detained at this harbour by contrary winds, Columbus was visited by a young cacique of apparently great importance. He was borne by four men on a sort of litter, and attended by two hundred of his subjects. The admi-

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ral being at dinner when he arrived, the young chieftain ordered his followers to remain without, and, entering the cabin, took his seat beside Columbus, not permitting him to rise or use any ceremony. Only two old men entered with him, who appeared to be his counsellors, and who seated themselves at his feet. If any thing were given him to eat or drink, he merely tasted it, and sent it to his followers, maintaining an air of great gravity and dignity. He spoke but little, his two counsellors watching his lips, and catching and communicating his ideas. After dinner he presented the admiral with a belt curiously wrought, and two pieces of gold. Columbus gave him a piece of cloth, several amber beads, coloured shoes, and a flask of orange flower water. He showed him Spanish coin, on which were the likenesses of the king and queen, and endeavoured to explain to him the power and grandeur of those sovereigns; he displayed also the royal banners and the standard of the cross. It was all in vain to attempt to convey any clear idea by these symbols; the cacique could not be made to believe that there was a region on the earth which produced these wonderful people and wonderful things; he joined in the common idea that the Spaniards were more than mortal, and that the country and sovereigns they talked of must exist somewhere in the skies.

In the evening the cacique was sent on shore in the boat with great ceremony, and a salute fired in honour of him. He departed in the state in which he had come, carried on a litter accompanied by a great concourse of his subjects. Not far behind him was his son, borne and escorted in like manner; and his brother, on foot, supported by two attendants. The presents which he had received from the admiral were carried before him with great ceremony.

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They procured but little gold in this place, though whatever ornaments the natives possessed they readily gave away. The region of promise still lay farther on, and one of the old counsellors of the cacique told Columbus that he would soon arrive at islands rich in the precious ore. Before leaving this place, the admiral caused a large cross to be erected in the centre of the village, and from the readiness with which the Indians assisted, and their implicit imitation of the Spaniards in their acts of adoration, he inferred that it would be an easy matter to convert them all to Christianity.

On the 19th of December they made sail before daylight, but with unfavourable wind; and, on the evening of the 20th they anchored in a fine harbour, to which Columbus gave the name of St. Thomas, supposed to be what at present is called the Bay of Acúl. It was surrounded by a beautiful and well peopled country. The inhabitants came off to the ships, some in canoes, some swimming, bringing fruits of various unknown kinds of great fragrance and flavour. These they gave freely, with whatever else they possessed, especially their golden ornaments, which they saw were particularly coveted by the strangers. There was a remarkable frankness and generosity about these people; they had no idea of traffic, but gave every thing with spontaneous liberality. Columbus would not permit his people, however, to take advantage of this free disposition, but ordered that something should always be given in exchange. Several of the neighbouring caciques visited the ships, bringing presents and inviting the Spaniards to their villages; where, on going to land, they were most hospitably entertained.

On the 22d December a large canoe filled with natives came on a mission from a grand cacique, named Guacanagari, who commanded all that part of the island. A princi-

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pal servant of that chieftain came in the canoe, bringing the admiral a present of a broad belt wrought ingeniously with coloured beads and bones, and a wooden mask, the eyes, nose, and tongue of which were of gold. He delivered also a message from the cacique begging that the ships might come opposite to his residence, which was on a part of the coast a little farther to the eastward. The wind preventing an immediate compliance with this invitation, the admiral sent the notary of the squadron, with several of the crew to visit the cacique. He resided in a town situated on a river at what they called Punta Santa, at present Point Honorata. It was the largest and best built town they had yet seen. The cacique received them in a kind of public square, which had been swept and prepared for the occasion, and treated them with great honour, giving to each a dress of cotton. The inhabitants crowded round them, bringing provisions and refreshments of various kinds. The seamen were received into their houses as distinguished guests; they gave them garments of cotton, and whatever else appeared to have value in their eyes, asking nothing in return, but if any thing were given, appearing to treasure it up as a sacred relique.

The cacique would have detained them all night, but their orders obliged them to return. On parting with them he gave them presents of parrots and of pieces of gold for the admiral; and they were attended to their boats by a crowd of the natives carrying the presents for them, and vying with each other in rendering them service.

During their absence the admiral had been visited by a great number of canoes, and several inferior caciques. All assured him that the island abounded with wealth: they talked especially of a region in the interior, farther to the

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east, which they called Cibao, the cacique of which, as far as they could be understood, had banners of wrought gold. Columbus, deceiving himself as usual, fancied that this name Cibao must be a corruption of Cipango, and that this chieftain with golden banners must be identical with the magnificent prince of that island, mentioned by Marco Polo*.

* Journal of Columb. Navarrete, Collec. T. 1. Herrera, Hist. Ind. D. 1, L. 1, C. 15, 16. Hist del Almirante, cap. 30, 31.

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CHAPTER VIII.

SHIPWRECK.

1492. On the morning of the 24th of December, Columbus set sail from Port Conception before sunrise, and steered to the eastward, with an intention of anchoring at the harbour of the cacique Guacanagari. The wind was from the land, but so light as scarcely to fill the sails, and the ships made but little progress. At eleven o'clock at night, being Christmas eve, they were within a league, or a league and a half, of the residence of the cacique, and Columbus, who had hitherto kept watch, finding the sea calm and smooth, and the ship almost motionless, retired to take a little rest, not having slept the preceding night. He was in general extremely wakeful on his coasting voyages, passing whole nights upon the deck in all weathers; never trusting to the watchfulness of others, where there was any difficulty or danger to be provided against. In the present instance, he felt perfectly secure; not merely on account of the profound calm, but because the boats, on the preceding day, in their visit to the cacique, had reconnoitered the coast, and had reported that there were neither rocks nor shoals in their course.

Never was the importance of the eye of a commander more clearly illustrated. No sooner had the vigilant admiral retired, than the steersman gave the helm in charge to one of the ship boys and went to sleep. This was in direct violation

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of one of the invariable orders of the admiral, that the helm should never be intrusted to the boys. The rest of the mariners who had the watch took like advantage of the absence of Columbus, and in a little while the whole crew was buried in sleep. While this security reigned over the ship, the treacherous currents, which run swiftly along this coast, carried her quietly, but with force upon a sand-bank. The heedless boy had not noticed the breakers, although they made a roaring that might have been heard a league. No sooner, however, did he feel the rudder strike, and hear the tumult of the rushing sea, than he began to cry for aid. Columbus, whose careful thoughts never permitted him to sleep profoundly, was the first to take the alarm, and mount the deck. The master of the ship, whose duty it was to have been on watch, next made his appearance, followed by others of the crew, half awake, and unconscious of the peril of their situation. The admiral ordered them to take the boat, and carry out an anchor astern, that they might endeavour to warp the vessel off. The master and the sailors sprang into the boat; but they were confused and seized with a panic, as men are apt to be when suddenly awakened by an alarm. Instead of obeying the commands of Columbus, they rowed off to the other caravel, which was about half a league to windward; while he, supposing that they were carrying out the anchor, trusted soon to get the vessel again into deep water.

When the boat arrived at the caravel, and made known the perilous state in which they had left their vessel, they were reproached with their pusillanimous desertion, and refused admission. The commander and several of his crew, manning their boat, hastened to the assistance of the admiral, and were followed by the recreant master and his companions, overed with shame and confusion.

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They arrived too late to save the ship, for the violent current had set her more and more upon the bank. The admiral, seeing that his boat had deserted him, that the ship had swung across the stream, and that the water was continually gaining upon her, had ordered the mast to be cut away, with the hope of lightening her sufficiently to float her off. Every effort was in vain. The keel was firmly bedded in the sand; the shock had opened several seams; while the swell of the breakers striking against her broadside, left her each moment more and more aground, until she fell over on one side. Fortunately the weather continued calm, otherwise the ship must have gone to pieces, and the whole crew might have perished amidst the currents and breakers.

The admiral and his men took refuge on board the caravel. Diego de Arana, chief judge of the armament, and Pedro Gutierrez, the king's butler, were immediately sent on shore as envoys to the cacique Guacaganari, to inform him of the intended visit of the admiral, and of his disastrous shipwreck. In the meantime, as a light wind had sprung up from shore, and the admiral was ignorant of his situation, and of the rocks and banks which might be lurking around him, he lay to until daylight.

The habitation of the cacique was about a league and a half from the wreck. When Guacanagari heard of the misfortune of his guests, he manifested the utmost affliction, and even shed tears. He immediately sent all his people, with all the canoes, large and small, that could be mustered; and so active were they in their assistance, that in a little while the vessel was unloaded. The cacique himself, and his brothers and relations, rendered all the aid in their power, both on sea and land, keeping vigilant guard that every thing should be conducted with order, and the property rescued from the wreck be preserved with inviolable fidelity.

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From time to time, he sent some one of his family, or some principal person of his attendants, to condole with the admiral, and to entreat him not to be distressed, for that every thing he possessed should be at his disposal.

Never, in civilized country, were the vaunted rites of hospitality more scrupulously observed, than by this uncultured savage. All the effects landed from the ship were deposited near his dwelling; and an armed guard surrounded them all night, until houses could be prepared in which to store them. There seemed, however, even among the common people, no disposition to take advantage of the misfortune of the strangers. Although they beheld what must in their eyes have been inestimable treasures, cast as it were upon their shores, and open to depredation, yet there was not the least attempt to pilfer, nor in transporting the effects from the ship, had they appropriated the most trifling article: on the contrary, a general sympathy was visible in their countenances and actions; and to have witnessed their concern, one would have supposed the misfortune had happened to themselves*.

* Hist. del Almirante, C. 32. Las Casas, Lib. 1, C. 9.

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CHAPTER IX.

TRANSACTIONS WITH THE NATIVES.

1492. On the twenty-sixth of December, Guacanagari came on board of the caravel Niña to visit the admiral; and observing him to be very much dejected, the compassionate heart of the cacique was so much moved, that he shed tears. He repeated the message which he had sent, entreating Columbus not to be cast down by his misfortune, and offering every thing he possessed, that might render him aid or consolation. He had already given three houses to shelter the Spaniards, and to receive the effects landed from the wreck, and he offered to furnish more if necessary.

While they were conversing, a canoe arrived from another part of the island, bringing pieces of gold to be exchanged for hawks' bells. There was nothing upon which the natives set so much value as upon these toys. The Indians were extravagantly fond of the dance, which they sometimes performed to the cadence of certain songs, accompanied by the sound of a kind of drum, made from the trunk of a tree, and the rattling of hollow bits of wood; but when they hung the hawks' bells about their persons, and heard their clear musical sound responding to their movements as they danced, nothing could exceed their wild delight.

The sailors who came from the shore, informed the admiral that considerable quantities of gold had been brought to barter, and large pieces were eagerly given for the merest

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trifle. This information had a cheering effect upon Columbus. The attentive cacique, perceiving the lighting up of his countenance, inquired into what the sailors had communicated. When he learnt its purport, and found that the admiral was extremely desirous of procuring gold, he assured him by signs, that there was a place not far off, among the mountains, where it abounded to such a degree as to be held in little value. He promised to procure him from thence as much as he desired. The place to which he alluded, and which he called Cibao, was in fact a mountainous region which the Spaniards afterwards found to contain valuable mines; but Columbus still confounded the name with that of Cipango*.

Guacanagari dined on board of the caravel with the admiral, after which he invited him on shore to visit his residence. Here he had prepared a collation, as choice and abundant as his simple means afforded, consisting of utias or coneys, fish, roots, and the various fruits with which the island abounded. The generous cacique did every thing in his power to honour his guest, and cheer him under his misfortune, showing a warmth of sympathy, yet delicacy of attention, which could not have been expected from his savage state. Indeed, there was a degree of innate dignity and refinement displayed in his manners, that often surprised the Spaniards. He was remarkably nice and decorous in his mode of eating, which was slow and with moderation, washing his hands when he had finished, and rubbing them with sweet and odoriferous herbs: which Columbus supposed was done to preserve their delicacy and softness. He was served with great deference by his subjects, and conducted himself towards them with a gracious and prince-like ma-

* Primer viage de Colon. Navarrete, T. 1, p. 114.

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jesty. His whole deportment, in the enthusiastic eyes of Columbus, betokened the inborn grace and dignity of lofty lineage*.

In fact, the sovereignty among the people of this island was hereditary, and they had a simple but sagacious mode of maintaining in some degree the verity of descent. On the death of a cacique without children, his authority passed to those of his sisters, in preference to those of his brothers, being considered most likely to be of his blood: for they observed that a brother's reputed children may by accident have no consanguinity with their uncle, but those of his sister must certainly be the children of their mother. The form of government was completely despotic; the caciques had entire control over the lives, the property, and even over the religion of their subjects. They had few laws, and ruled according to their judgment and their will; but they ruled mildly, and were implicitly and cheerfully obeyed. Throughout the course of the disastrous history of these islanders, after their discovery by the Europeans, there are continual proofs of their affectionate and devoted fidelity to their caciques.

After the collation, Guacanagari conducted Columbus to the beautiful groves which surrounded his residence. They were attended by upwards of a thousand of the natives, all perfectly naked. Under the shade of their groves, the natives performed several of their national games and dances, which Guacanagari had ordered, to amuse the melancholy of his guest.

When the Indians had finished their games, Columbus gave them an entertainment in return, calculated at the same

* Las Casas, L. 1, C. 70. MS. Primer viage de Colon, Navarrete, T. 1, p. 114.

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time to impress them with a formidable idea of the military power of the Spaniards. He sent on board the caravel for a Moorish bow, and a quiver of arrows, and a Castilian, who had served in the wars of Granada, and was skilful in the use of them. When the cacique beheld the accuracy with which this man used his weapons, he was greatly surprised, being himself of an unwarlike character, and little accustomed to the use of arms. He told the admiral that the Caribs, who often made descents upon his territory, and carried off his subjects, were likewise armed with bows and arrows. Columbus assured him of the protection of the Castilian monarchs, who would destroy the Caribs; for he let him know that he had weapons far more tremendous, against which there was no defence. In proof of this, he ordered a Lombard or heavy cannon and an arquebus to be discharged.

At the sound of these weapons, the Indians fell to the ground as though they had been struck by a thunderbolt; and when they saw the effect of the ball, rending and shivering the trees like a stroke of lightning, they were filled with dismay. On being told, however, that the Spaniards would defend them with these arms, against the invasions of their dreaded enemies the Caribs, their alarm was changed into confident exultation; for they considered themselves under the protection of the sons of heaven, who had come from the skies, armed with thunder and lightning.

The cacique now presented Columbus with several of his national jewels: a mask carved of wood, with the eyes, ears, and various other parts of gold; he hung plates of the same metal around his neck, and placed a kind of golden coronet upon his head. He displayed also the natural munificence of his spirit, by dispensing various presents among the followers of the admiral; acquitting himself, in all things, in

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his simple and savage state, in a manner that would have done honour to an accomplished prince, in civilized life.

Whatever trifles Columbus gave in return, were regarded with reverence as celestial gifts. The Indians, in admiring all articles of European manufacture, continually repeated the word Turey, which in their language signifies heaven. They pretended to distinguish the different qualities of gold by the smell: in the same way when any article of tin, of silver, or other white metal was given them, to which they were unaccustomed, they smelt it, and declared it *turey* of excellent quality, giving in exchange pieces of the finest gold. Every thing, in fact, from the hands of the Spaniards was precious in their eyes; a rusty piece of iron, an end of a strap, a head of a nail, every thing had an occult and supernatural value, and smell of *turey*. Hawks' bells, however, were by them sought with a mania only equalled by that of the Spaniards for gold. They could not contain their ecstasies at their sound, dancing, and playing a thousand antics. On one occasion an Indian gave half a handful of gold dust in exchange for one of these toys, and no sooner was in possession of it, than he bounded away to the woods, looking often behind him, and fearful that the Spaniard would repent of having parted so cheaply with such an inestimable jewel*.

The extreme kindness of the cacique, the gentleness of his people, the quantities of gold which were daily brought to be exchanged for the veriest trifles, and the information continually received of sources of wealth in the bosom of this beautiful island, all contributed to console the admiral for the misfortune he had suffered.

* Las Casas, L. 1, C. 70. MS.

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The shipwrecked crew also, living on shore, and mingling freely with the natives, became fascinated with their easy and idle mode of life. Exempted by their simplicity from the painful cares and toils which civilized man inflicts upon himself, by his many artificial wants, the existence of these islanders seemed to the Spaniards like a pleasant dream. They disquieted themselves about nothing. A few fields, cultivated almost without labour, furnished the roots and vegetables which formed a great part of their diet. Their rivers and coasts abounded with fish; their trees were laden with fruits of golden or blushing hue, and heightened by a tropical sun to delicious flavour and fragrance. Softened by the indulgence of nature, a great part of their day was passed in indolent repose, in that luxury of sensation inspired by a serene sky, and a voluptuous climate; and in the evenings, they danced in their fragrant groves, to their national songs, or the rude sound of their sylvan drums.

Such was the indolent and holy-day life of these simple people; which if it had not the great scope of enjoyment, nor the high-seasoned poignancy of pleasure, which attends civilization, was certainly destitute of most of its artificial miseries. The venerable Las Casas, speaking of their perfect nakedness, observes, it seemed almost as if they were existing in the state of primeval innocence of our first parents, before their fall brought shame into the world. He might have added, that they seemed exempt, likewise, from the penalty inflicted on the children of Adam, that they should eat their bread by the sweat of their brow.

When the Spanish mariners looked back upon their toilsome and painful life; and reflected on the cares and hardships that must still be their lot, if they returned to Europe; it is no wonder that they regarded with a wistful eye the easy

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and idle existence of these Indians. Wherever they went, they met with caressing hospitality. The men were simple, frank and cordial; the women loving and compliant, and prompt to form those connexions which anchor the most wandering heart. They saw gold glittering around them, to be had without labour, and every enjoyment to be procured without cost.

Captivated by these advantages, many of the seamen surrounded the admiral; they represented the difficulties and sufferings which they must encounter on a return voyage, where so many would be crowded in a small caravel; and they entreated permission to remain in the island*.

* Primer viage de Colon. Navarrete, T. 1, p. 116.

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CHAPTER X.

BUILDING OF THE FORTRESS OF LA NAVIDAD.

1492. THE solicitude expressed by many of his people to be left behind, added to the friendly and pacific character of the natives, now suggested to Columbus the idea of forming the germ of a future colony. The wreck of the caravel would afford abundant materials to construct a fortress, which might be defended by her guns, and supplied with her ammunition; and he could spare provisions enough to maintain a small garrison for a year. The people who thus remained on the island could explore it, and make themselves acquainted with its mines, and other sources of wealth; they might, at the same time, procure by traffic a large quantity of gold from the natives; they could learn their language, and accustom themselves to their habits and manners, so as to be of great use in future intercourse. In the meantime, the admiral could return to Spain, report the success of his enterprize, and bring out reinforcements.

No sooner did this idea break upon the mind of Columbus, than he set about accomplishing it with his accustomed promptness and celerity. The wreck was broken up and brought piecemeal to shore; and a site chosen, and preparations made for the erection of a tower. When Guacanagari was informed of the intention of the admiral to leave a part of his men for the defence of the island from the Caribs,

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while he returned to his country for more, he was greatly overjoyed. His subjects manifested equal delight at the idea of retaining these wonderful people among them; and at the prospect of the future arrival of the admiral, with ships freighted with hawks' bells, and other precious articles. They eagerly lent their assistance in building the fortress; little dreaming that they were assisting to place on their necks the galling yoke of perpetual and toilsome slavery.

The preparations for the fortress were scarcely commenced, when a report was brought by certain Indians, that the caravel Pinta had anchored in a river at the eastern end of the island. Columbus immediately procured a canoe from Guacanagari, navigated by several Indians, in which he sent a Spaniard, with a letter to Pinzon, making no complaints of his desertion, but urging him to join company immediately.

After three days' absence, the canoe returned, having coasted the island for twenty leagues, without having seen or heard any thing of the Pinta; and though the admiral immediately afterwards had further reports of her being to the eastward, he gave them no credit.

The desertion of this vessel was a source of great anxiety to Columbus, and altered all his plans. Should Pinzon return to Spain before him, he would doubtless seek to excuse his conduct by injurious misrepresentations, detrimental to his future expeditions. He might even try to forestal him with the public, and bear off the glory of the discovery. Should the Pinta be lost, the situation of Columbus was still more critical. But one ship of the three would then be surviving; and that an indifferent sailer. On the precarious return of that crazy bark, across an immense expanse of ocean, depended the ultimate success of his expedition. Should that

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one likewise perish, every record of his great discovery would be swallowed up with it; the obscurity of his fate would perhaps deter all future enterprize, and the new world would remain, as heretofore, unknown. He durst not risk such an event by prolonging his voyage, and exploring those magnificent regions which seemed to be inviting him on every hand. He determined, therefore, to lose no time in returning direct to Spain.

While the fortress was building, the admiral continued to receive every day new proofs of the amity and kindness of Guacanagari. Whenever he went on shore, to superintend the works, he was entertained in the most hospitable manner by that chieftain. He had the largest house in the place prepared for his reception, strewed or carpeted with palm leaves, and furnished with low stools of a black and shining wood that looked like jet. When he received the admiral, it was always in a style of princely generosity, hanging around his neck some jewel of gold, or making him some present of similar value.

On one occasion he came to meet him on his landing, attended by five tributary caciques, each wearing a coronet of gold; they conducted him with great deference to the house already mentioned, where, seating him in one of the chairs, Guacanagari took off his own coronet of gold and placed it upon his head; Columbus in return took from his neck a collar of fine coloured beads, which he put round that of the cacique, he invested him in a mantle of fine cloth which he wore, gave him a pair of coloured boots, and put on his finger a large silver ring; upon which metal the Indians set a great value, it not being found in their island. Such were the acts of kindness and amity continually interchanged between Columbus and this warm hearted and open-handed cacique.

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The latter, also, exerted himself to the utmost, to procure a great quantity of gold for the admiral before his departure. The supplies thus furnished, and the vague accounts collected through the medium of signs and imperfect interpretations, filled the mind of Columbus with magnificent ideas of the wealth which must exist in the interior of this island. The names of caciques, mountains, and provinces were confused together in his imagination, and supposed to mean various places where great treasure was to be found. Above all the name of Cibao continually occurred, which was understood to be some golden region among the mountains, from whence the natives procured most of the ore for their ornaments. In the pimiento or red pepper which abounded in the island, Columbus fancied he found a trace of oriental spices, and he thought he had met with specimens of rhubarb.

Passing with his usual buoyancy of spirit from a state of doubt and anxiety to one of sanguine anticipation, he now considered his shipwreck as one of those providential events mysteriously ordained by heaven to work out the success of his enterprize. Without this seeming disaster he should never have remained to find out the secret wealth of the island, but should merely have touched at various parts of its coast and have passed on. As a proof that the particular hand of providence was exerted in it he cites the circumstance of his having been wrecked in a perfect calm, without wind or wave; and the desertion of the pilot and mariners when sent to carry out an anchor astern; for had they performed his orders the vessel would have been hauled off; they would have pursued their voyage, and the treasures of the island would have remained a secret to them. But now he looked forward to glorious fruits to be reaped from this seeming evil; for he hoped in God, he said, that when he returned

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from Spain he should find a ton of gold collected in traffic by those whom he had left behind, and that they had discovered mines and spices in such quantities that the sovereigns before three years would be able to undertake a crusade for the deliverance of the holy sepulchre. "For so I protested to your highnesses," he adds, "that all the gain of this my enterprize should be spent in the conquest of Jerusalem, and your highnesses laughed, and said that it pleased you, and that without this you were well disposed to the undertaking*."

Such was the visionary yet generous enthusiasm of Columbus the moment that prospects of vast wealth broke upon his mind. What in some spirits would have awakened a grasping and sordid avidity to accumulate, immediately filled his imagination with plans of magnificent expenditure. But how vain are our attempts to interpret the inscrutable decrees of providence! The shipwreck which Columbus considered an act of divine favour, to reveal to him the secrets of the land, shackled and limited all his after discoveries. It linked his fortunes for the remainder of his life to this island, which was doomed to be to him a scene of cares and troubles, to involve him in a thousand perplexities, and to becloud his declining years with humiliation and disappointment.

* Primer viage de Colon. Navarrete, T. 1, p. 117.

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CHAPTER XI.

REGULATION OF THE FORTRESS OF LA NAVIDAD—DEPARTURE OF COLUMBUS FOR SPAIN.

So great was the activity of the Spaniards in the construction of their fortress, and so ample the assistance rendered by the natives, that in ten days it was sufficiently complete for service. A large vault had been made, over which was erected a strong wooden tower, and the whole was surrounded by a wide ditch: it was stored with all the ammunitions that had been saved from the wreck, or that could be spared from the caravel, and the guns being mounted, the whole had a formidable aspect, sufficient to overawe and repulse this naked and unwarlike people. Indeed Columbus was of opinion that but little force was necessary to subjugate the whole island. He considered a fortress, and the restrictions of a garrison more requisite to keep the Spaniards themselves in order, and to prevent their wandering about, and committing acts of licentiousness among the natives.

The fortress being finished, he gave to it, as well as to the adjacent village, and the harbour, the name of La Navidad, or The Nativity, in memorial of their having escaped from shipwreck on Christmas day. There were many volunteers to remain on the island; from whom he selected thirty-nine

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of the most able and exemplary. The command of the whole was given to Diego de Arana, a native of Cordova, and notary and alguazil to the armament, who was to retain all the powers which had been vested in him by the Catholic sovereigns. In case of his death he was to be succeeded by Pedro Gutierrez, and he dying, by Rodrigo de Escobedo. There were also among the number a physician, a ship carpenter, a caulker, a cooper, a tailor, and a gunner; all expert at their several arts. The boat of the wreck was left with them, to be used in fishing; a variety of seeds to sow; and a large quantity of articles used in Indian traffic, that they might procure as much gold as possible against the admiral's return*.

As the time drew nigh for his departure, Columbus assembled the men who were to remain in the island, and addressed them in the most earnest and emphatic language. He charged them, in the name of the sovereigns, to be obedient to the officer to whom he had intrusted the command: that they should maintain the utmost respect and reverence for the cacique Guacanagari and his chieftains; recollecting how deeply they were indebted to his goodness, and how important a continuance of it was to their welfare: that they should be circumspect in their intercourse with the natives, treating them always with gentleness and justice; avoiding all acts of violence, and all disputes; and above all being discreet in their conduct towards the Indian women, the frequent source of troubles and disasters in the intercourse with savage nations. He warned them, moreover, not to scatter themselves asunder, but to keep together, as they derived

* Primer viage de Colon. Navarrete, T. 1. Hist. del Almirante, C. 33.

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safety from their united number; and that they should not stray beyond the friendly territory of Guacanagari. He enjoined it upon Arana, and the other persons in command, to do their utmost to acquire a knowledge of the productions and mines of the island; to procure gold and spices; and to explore the coast in search of a better situation for a settlement, the present harbour being inconvenient and dangerous, on account of the rocks and shoals which beset its entrance.

1493. On the 2d of January, 1493, Columbus landed to take a farewell of the generous cacique and his chieftains, intending the next day to set sail. He gave them all a parting feast at the house which had been devoted to his use, and commended to their kindness the men who were to remain, especially Diego de Arana, Pedro Gutierrez, and Rodrigo de Escobedo, his lieutenants, assuring them that when he returned from Castile, he would bring abundance of jewels more precious than any they had yet seen. The worthy Guanacagari showed great concern at the idea of his departure, and assured him that as to those who remained, he should furnish them with provisions, and render them every service in his power.

Once more to impress the islanders with an idea of the warlike powers of the white men, Columbus had skirmishes and mock fights performed by his crews. In these they made use of their various arms and weapons; their swords, bucklers, lances, crossbows, arquebusses and cannon. The Indians were astonished at the keenness of the swords, and at the deadly power of the crossbows and arquebusses; but when the heavy lombards were discharged from the fortress, wrapping it in wreaths of smoke, shaking the forests with their thunder, and shivering the trees with the balls of stone,

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which in those times were used in artillery; there was the deepest awe mingled with their admiration. Conceiving that these tremendous powers were all to be employed for their protection, they rejoiced while they trembled, since no Carib would now dare to invade the tranquillity of their island, and carry them into captivity*.

When the festivities of the day were over, Columbus embraced the cacique and his principal chieftains, and took a final leave of them. Guacanagari was greatly affected, and shed tears; for while he had been awed by the dignified demeanour of the admiral, and the idea of his superhuman nature, he had been completely won by the benignity of his manners. Indeed, the parting scene was sorrowful on all sides. The arrival of the ships had been an event of wonder and excitement to the islanders, who had as yet known nothing but the good qualities of their guests, and had been enriched by their celestial gifts; while the rude seamen had been flattered by the blind deference paid them, and captivated by the kindness and unlimited indulgence with which they had been treated.

The sorest parting was between the Spaniards who embarked, and those who remained behind; for there is a strong sympathy arising from a companionship in perils and adventures, which binds the hearts of men together. The little garrison, however, evinced a cheerful spirit and stout resolution. They looked forward with bright anticipations to the day when the admiral should return from Spain with large reinforcements, and they promised to give him a good account of all things in the island. The caravel was detained one day longer by the absence of some of the In-

* Primer viage de Colon. Navarrete, T. 1, p. 121.

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dians whom they were to take to Spain. At length the signal gun was fired; they gave a parting cheer to the handful of comrades thus left in the wilderness of an unknown world: who echoed their cheering as they gazed wistfully after them from the beach, but who were destined never to welcome their return.

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LIFE AND VOYAGES

OF

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS.

BOOK V.

CHAPTER I.

COASTING TOWARDS THE EASTERN END OF HISPANIOLA—MEETING WITH PINZON—AFFAIR WITH THE NATIVES AT THE GULF OF SAMANA.

1493. It was on the 4th of January that Columbus set sail from La Navidad on his return to Spain. The wind being light, it was necessary to tow the caravel out of the harbour, and clear of the reefs which environed it. They then stood eastward, towards a lofty promontory, without trees, but covered with grass, and shaped like a tent, having at a distance the appearance of a towering island, being connected with Hispaniola by a low neck of land. To this bold promontory Columbus gave the name of Monte Christi, by which it is still known. The country in the immediate neighbourhood was level, but further inland rose high ranges of mountains, well wooded, with broad fruitful valleys between them, watered by abundant streams. The wind

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being contrary, they were detained for two days in a large bay to the west of the promontory. On the 6th they again made sail with a land breeze, and weathering the cape, advanced ten leagues, when the wind again turned to blow freshly from the east. At this time, a sailor stationed at the mast-head to look out for rocks, cried out that he beheld the Pinta at a distance. Every one was animated at the intelligence, for it was a joyful event once more to meet with their companion in these lonely seas. The Pinta came sweeping towards them directly before the wind, with flowing canvas, and the admiral seeing that it was in vain to contend with the adverse wind, and that there was no safe anchorage in the neighbourhood, put back to the bay west of Monte Christi, followed by the other caravel. At their first interview, Martin Alonzo Pinzon endeavoured to account to the admiral for his temporary desertion, pretending that it was involuntary, and offering various weak and unsatisfactory excuses. Columbus restrained his indignation, and tacitly admitted them. Pinzon had a powerful party in the armament; most of the mariners were his townsmen, several of them his relatives, and one of the commanders was his brother; whereas Columbus was a stranger among them, and what was worse, a foreigner. Pinzon had ungenerously presumed upon these circumstances several times in the course of the voyage, arrogating to himself undue importance, and treating the admiral with disrespect. Unwilling to provoke any altercations which might disturb the remainder of the voyage, Columbus listened passively, but incredulously, to the excuses of Pinzon, convinced that he had wilfully parted from him, for selfish purposes. Various particulars, gathered partly from his own story, and partly from that of his companions, confirmed this opinion. It was evident he had been actuated by a sudden impulse of avarice. On parting

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with the other caravels, he had steered eastward in search of an island of imaginary wealth, described by the Indians on board of his vessel. Having wasted some time among a cluster of small islands, supposed to have been the Caicos, he had at length been guided by the Indians to Hispaniola, where he had been for three weeks, trading in various places with the natives; especially in a river about fifteen leagues east of the harbour of Nativity. He had collected a large quantity of gold, one half of which he retained, as captain, the rest he divided among his men to secure their fidelity and secresy. After thus making considerable booty, he had left the river, carrying off four Indian men and two girls, whom he had taken by force, with the intention of selling them in Spain. He pretended to have been entirely ignorant that Columbus was in a neighbouring part of the island, and declared that he was in search of him when they met off Monte Christi*.

Being thus rejoined by the other caravel, Columbus would have felt encouraged to explore the coasts of this fancied island of Cipango, in which case he had no doubt of being able to load his ships with treasure; but he had lost all confidence in the Pinzons; he found himself subjected to frequent arrogance and contradiction from them, and had no security that Martin Alonzo might not again desert him on the least temptation. He determined, therefore, to continue his route to Spain, and to leave the exploring of these golden regions for a subsequent expedition.

The boats were accordingly dispatched to a large river which empties itself into the bay, to take in a supply of wood and water for the voyage. This river, called by the natives the Yaqui, descends from the mountains of the interior,

* Hist. del Almirante, C. 34.

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and in its course to the ocean receives the contributions of various minor streams. Columbus observed among the sands at its mouth many particles of gold*, and found others adhering to the hoops of the water casks, wherefore he gave to this stream the name of Rio del Oro, or the Golden River; it is at present called the Santiago. In this neighbourhood were turtles of a great size. Columbus also mentions in his journal that he saw three mermaids, which elevated themselves above the surface of the sea; and he observes that he had before seen such on the coast of Africa. He adds that they were by no means the beautiful beings they had been represented, although they possessed some traces of the human countenance. It is supposed that these must have been manate or sea-calves, seen indistinctly and at a distance; and that the imagination of Columbus, disposed to give a wonderful character to every thing in this new world, had identified these mis-shapen animals with the syrens of ancient story.

On the evening of the 9th January they again made sail, and on the following day arrived at the river where Pinzon had been trading, to which Columbus gave the name of Rio de Gracia; but it took the appellation of its original discoverer, and long continued to be known as the river of Martin Alonzo. Here he had additional proofs of Pinzon's duplicity; ascertaining that he had been sixteen days in the river, although he had obliged his crew to declare that he had been but six: and that he had received tidings of the shipwreck at the harbour of Nativity, but had delayed sail-

* Las Casas suggests that these may have been particles of marcasite, which abounds in this river, and in the other streams, which fall from the mountains of Cibao. Las Casas, Hist. Ind. L. 1, C. 76.

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ing to the assistance of the admiral until he had served his own interests, by collecting gold*. Columbus still forbore to notice this flagrant violation of duty; but he obliged Pinzon to restore to their homes the four men and two girls whom he had taken from this neighbourhood, and who were dismissed well clothed, and with many presents, to atone for the wrong they had experienced, and to prevent its prejudicing the natives against the Spaniards. This restitution was made with great unwillingness, and many high words, on the part of Alonzo Pinzon.

The wind being favourable, for in these regions the trade wind is often alternated during autumn and winter, by north-westerly breezes, they continued coasting the island, until they came to a high and beautiful head-land, to which they gave the name of Cape del Enamorado, or the Lover's Cape, but which at present is known as Cape Caboon. A little beyond this, they anchored in a vast bay, or rather gulf, three leagues in breadth, and extending so far inland, that Columbus at first supposed it might be an arm of the sea, separating Hispaniola from some other land. On landing they found the natives quite different from the gentle and pacific people they had hitherto met with on this island. These were of a ferocious aspect, and of a turbulent and warlike deportment. They were hideously painted, and wore their hair long and tied behind, and decorated with the feathers of parrots and other birds of gaudy plumage. They were armed with bows and arrows, war clubs, and swords of a formidable kind. Their bows were of the length of those used by the English archers; their arrows were of slender reeds, pointed with hard wood, and sometimes tipped with bone or with the tooth of a fish. Their swords were of palm

* Hist. del Almirante, C. 34.

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wood, as hard and heavy as iron; they were not sharp, but broad, nearly of the thickness of two fingers, and capable with one blow of cleaving through a helmet to the very brains*. Though thus prepared for combat, the natives made no attempt to molest the Spaniards; on the contrary, they sold the latter two of their bows and several of their arrows, and one of them was prevailed upon to go on board of the admiral's ship.

When Columbus beheld the ferocious looks, and hardy, undaunted manner of this wild warrior, he was persuaded that he and his companions must be of the nation of Caribs so much dreaded throughout these seas, and that the gulf in which he was anchored must be a strait separating their island from Hispaniola. On inquiring of the Indian, however, he still pointed to the east, as the quarter in which were situated the Caribbean islands. He spoke also of an island which he called Mantinino, which, Columbus fancied him to say, was peopled merely by women, who received the Caribs among them once in the course of the year, for the sake of continuing the population of their island. All the male progeny resulting from such visits were delivered to the fathers, the female remained with the mothers. This Amazonian island is repeatedly mentioned in the course of the voyages of Columbus; and is another of his self-delusions, which are to be explained by the work of Marco Polo. That traveller describes two islands near the coast of Asia, one inhabited solely by women, the other by men, between which a similar intercourse subsists†; and Columbus supposing himself in that vicinity, easily interpreted the signs of the Indians to coincide with the descriptions of the Venetian.

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind. L. 1, C. 77.

† Marco Polo, L. 3, C. 37.

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Having regaled this warrior on board of the caravel, and made him various presents, the admiral sent him on shore, in hopes, through his mediation, of opening a trade for gold with his countrymen. As the boat approached the land, upwards of fifty savages, armed with bows and arrows, war clubs and javelins, were seen lurking among the trees. On a word from the Indian who was in the boat, they laid by their arms, and came forth to meet the Spaniards. The latter, according to directions from the admiral, endeavoured to purchase several of their weapons, to take as curiosities to Spain. They parted with two of their bows; but suddenly conceiving some distrust, or thinking to overpower this handful of strangers, they rushed to the place where they had left their weapons, snatched them up, and returned with menacing looks, and provided with cords, as if to bind the Spaniards. The latter immediately attacked them, wounded two, and put the rest to flight, terrified at the flashing lustre and keen edge of the European weapons. The Spaniards would have pursued and put several to the sword, but they were restrained by the pilot who commanded the boat. This was the first contest they had had with the Indians, and the first time that native blood had been shed by the white men in the new world. Columbus lamented to see all his exertions to maintain an amicable intercourse vain; he consoled himself with the idea, however, that if these were Caribs, or frontier Indians of warlike character, they would be inspired with a dread of the force and the weapons of the white men, and would thus be deterred from molesting the little garrison of Fort Nativity. The fact was, that these were of the tribe of the Ciguayans, a bold and hardy race of Indians, inhabiting a mountainous district, extending five and twenty leagues along the coast, and several leagues into the interior. They differed in language, looks and manners from

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the other natives of the island, and had more of the rude, but independent and vigorous, character which belongs to mountaineers. Their frank and bold spirit was evinced on the day after the skirmish, when, a multitude appearing on the beach, the admiral sent a large party, well armed, on shore in the boat. The natives immediately approached as freely and confidingly as if nothing had happened; neither did they betray, throughout their subsequent intercourse, any signs of lurking fear or enmity. The cacique who ruled over the neighbouring country was on the shore. He sent to the boat a string of beads formed of small stones, or rather of the hard part of shells, which the Spaniards understood to be a token and assurance of amity; they were not yet aware of the full meaning of this symbol, which was the wampum belt, the pledge of peace held sacred among the Indians. The chieftain followed shortly after, and entering the boat with only three attendants, was conveyed on board of the caravel.

This frank and confiding conduct, so indicative of a brave and generous nature, was properly appreciated by Columbus; he received the cacique with cordial friendship, sat before him a collation such as the caravel afforded, particularly biscuits and honey, which appear to have been great dainties with the Indians, and, after showing him the wonders of the vessel, and making him and his attendants many presents, sent them to land highly gratified by their entertainment. The residence of the cacique was at such a distance that he could not repeat his visit. As a token of high regard and gratitude, however, he sent the admiral his coronet of gold. In speaking of these incidents, the historians of Columbus have made no mention of the name of this mountain chief; he was doubtless the same who, a few years afterwards, appears in the history of the island under the name of Ma-

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yonabex, cacique of the Ciguayans, and will be found acquitting himself with valour, frankness and magnanimity, under the most trying circumstances.

Columbus remained a day or two longer in the bay, during which time the most friendly intercourse prevailed with the natives, who brought cotton, and various fruits and vegetables, but still manifested their warrior character, being always armed with bows and arrows. From four young Indians who came on board of the caravel, Columbus received such interesting accounts of the islands said to lie to the east, that he determined to touch there on his way to Spain, and he prevailed on these young men to accompany him as guides. Taking advantage of a favourable wind, therefore, he sailed before daylight on the 16th January, from this bay, to which, in consequence of the skirmish with the natives, he gave the name of Golfo de las Fleches, or the Gulf of Arrows, but which is now known by the name of the Gulf of Samaná.

On leaving the bay, Columbus at first steered to the northeast, in which direction the young Indians assured him he would find the island of the Caribs, and that of Mantinino, the abode of the Amazons; it being his desire to take several of the natives of each, to present to the Spanish sovereigns. After sailing about sixteen leagues, however, his Indian guides changed their opinion, and pointed to the southeast. This would have brought him to Porto Rico, which, in fact, was known among the Indians as the island of Carib.

The admiral immediately shifted sail, and stood in this direction. He had not proceeded two leagues, however, when a most favourable breeze sprang up for the voyage to Spain. He observed a gloom gathering on the countenances of the sailors as they diverged from the homeward route. Reflecting upon the little hold he had upon the feelings and affec-

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tions of these men, the insubordinate spirit they had evinced on former occasions in the voyage, the want of faith and loyalty on the part of Pinzon, and also on the leaky condition of his ships, he was suddenly brought to a pause. As long as he protracted his return, the whole fate of his discovery was at the mercy of a thousand contingencies, and an adverse accident might bury himself, his crazy barks, and all the records of his voyage, for ever in the ocean. Repressing, therefore, the strong inclination to seek further discoveries, and determined to place what he had already made beyond the reach of accident, he once more shifted sail, to the great joy of his crews, and resumed his course for Spain.

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CHAPTER II.

RETURN VOYAGE—VIOLENT STORMS—ARRIVAL AT THE AZORES.

1493. THE trade winds, which had been so propitious to Columbus on his outward voyage, wafting him with flowing sail to the new world, were equally adverse to him on his return. The favourable breeze soon died away, and for the remainder of January there was a prevalence of light winds from the eastward, which prevented his making any great progress. He was frequently detained also by the bad sailing of the Pinta; her foremast was defective, so that it could carry but little sail, an evil which Pinzon had neglected to remedy while in port, in his eager search after gold. The weather continued mild and pleasant, and the sea so calm that the Indians, whom they were taking to Spain, would frequently plunge into the water, and swim about the ships. They saw many tunny fish, one of which they killed, as likewise a large shark; these gave them a temporary supply of provisions, of which they soon began to stand in need, their sea stock being reduced to bread and wine and agi-peppers, which they had learnt from the Indians to use as an important article of food.

In the early part of February, having run to about the thirty-eighth degree of north latitude, and got out of the

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tract of ocean swept by the trade winds, they began to have more favourable breezes, and were enabled to steer direct for Spain. In consequence of the frequent change of course, the pilots became extremely perplexed in their reckonings, differing widely among themselves, and still more widely from the truth. Columbus, beside keeping a reckoning with great care, was a vigilant observer of all those phenomena by which experienced seamen ascertain latitudes and longitudes, in what to an unpractised eye appears to be a blank expanse of ocean. In all his voyages he studied the simple indications furnished by the sea, the air, and the sky, with the watchful and anxious eye of a commander; the fate of himself and his ships, in the unknown regions which he traversed, often depended upon these observations; and the sagacity at which he arrived, in decyphering the signs of the elements, was looked upon by the common seamen as something almost supernatural. In the present instance, on his return homewards, he had noticed when the great bands of floating weeds commenced, and when they finished; and in emerging from among them, concluded himself to be in about the same degree of longitude as when he encountered them on his outward voyage: that is to say, about two hundred and sixty leagues west of Ferro. On the 10th February, Vincente Yañez Pinzon, and the pilots Ruiz and Bartolomeo Roldan, who were on board the admiral's ship, examined the charts and compared their reckonings, to determine their situation, but could not come to any agreement. They all supposed themselves at least one hundred and fifty leagues nearer Spain than what Columbus believed to be the true reckoning, and in the latitude of Madeira, whereas he knew them to be nearly in a direction for the Azores. He suffered them, however, to remain in their error, and even added to

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their perplexities, that they might retain but a confused idea of the voyage, and he alone possess a clear knowledge of the route to the newly discovered countries*.

On the 12th of February, as they were flattering themselves with soon coming in sight of land, the wind came on to blow violently, and the sea to be greatly agitated; they still kept their course to the east, but with great labour and peril from the turbulence of the elements. On the following day, after sunset, the wind and sea increased; there were three flashes of lightning in the north-northeast; considered by Columbus as signals of an approaching tempest, either from that or the opposite quarter. It soon burst upon them with frightful violence. Their small and crazy vessels, open and without decks, were little fitted for the wild storms of the Atlantic; all night they were obliged to remain under bare poles, driven along by the fury of the winds. As the morning dawned of the 14th, there was a transient pause, and they made a little sail; but the wind arose again, with redoubled vehemence, from the south, raging throughout the day, and increasing in fury in the night, while the vessels laboured terribly in a cross sea, the broken waves of which threatened at each moment to overwhelm them, or dash them to pieces. For three hours they lay with just sail enough to keep them above the waves; but the tempest still augmenting, they were obliged to give up all attempt to withstand it, and to scud before the wind. The Pinta did the same, but was soon lost sight of in the darkness of the night. The admiral kept as much as possible to the northeast, to approach to the coast of Spain, and made signal lights at the mast head for the Pinta to do the same, and to keep in company. The latter, however, from the weakness of her foremast, could

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind. L 1. Cap. 70.

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not hold the wind, and was obliged to scud before it, directly north. For some time she replied to the signals of the admiral, but her lights gleamed more and more distant, until they ceased entirely, and nothing more was seen of her.

Columbus continued to scud all the night, full of forebodings of the fate of his own vessel, and of fears for the safety of that of Pinzon. As the day dawned the sea presented a frightful waste of wild broken waves, lashed into fury by the gale; he looked around anxiously for the Pinta, but she was nowhere to be seen. He now made a little sail to keep his vessel ahead of the sea, lest its huge waves should break over them; as the sun rose the wind and the waves rose with it, and throughout a dreary day the helpless bark was driven along by the fury of the tempest.

Seeing all human skill baffled and confounded, Columbus now endeavoured to propitiate the heavens, by solemn vows and penitences. By his orders a number of beans, equal to the number of persons on board, was put into a cup, on one of which was cut the sign of the cross. Each of the crew made a vow that, should he draw forth the marked bean, he would make a pilgrimage to the shrine of Santa Maria de Guadalupe, bearing a wax taper of five pounds weight. The admiral was the first to put in his hand, and the lot fell upon him. From that moment he considered himself a pilgrim bound to perform the vow. Another lot was cast in the same way, for a pilgrimage to the chapel of our Lady of Loretto, which fell upon a seaman, named Pedro de Villa, and the admiral engaged to bear the expenses of his journey. A third lot was also cast for a pilgrimage to Santa Clara de Moguer, to perform a solemn mass, and to watch all night in the chapel, and this likewise fell upon Columbus.

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The tempest still raging with unabated violence, the admiral and all the mariners made a solemn vow, that if they were spared to reach the land, wherever they first went on shore they would go in procession, barefooted and in their shirts, to offer up prayers and thanksgiving in some church of the invocation of the holy virgin. Beside these general acts of propitiation, each one made his private vow, binding himself to some pilgrimage, or vigil, or other rite of penitence and thanksgiving at his favourite shrine. Such has always been the custom with mariners of Catholic countries, in times of tempest and peril; but it was especially the case in that superstitious age. The heavens, however, seemed deaf to these pious vows; the storm grew still more wild and frightful, and each man gave himself up for lost. The danger of the ship was augmented by the want of ballast, the consumption of the water and provisions having lightened her so much, that she rolled and tossed about at the mercy of the waves. To remedy this, and to render her more steady, the admiral ordered that all the empty casks should be filled with sea-water, which in some measure gave relief.

During this long and awful conflict of the elements, the mind of Columbus was a prey to the most distressing anxiety. He feared the Pinta had foundered in the storm. In such case the whole history of his discovery, the secret of the new world, depended upon his own feeble bark; and one surge of the ocean might bury it for ever in oblivion. The tumult of thoughts may be judged from his own letter to the sovereigns. "I could have supported this evil fortune with less grief," said he, "had my person alone been in jeopardy, since I am a debtor for my life to the supreme Creator, and have at other times been within a step of death. But it was a cause of infinite sorrow and trouble to think, that after having been illuminated from on high with faith

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and certainty to undertake this enterprize; after having victoriously achieved it, and when on the point of convincing my opponents, and securing to your highnesses great glory and vast increase of dominion, it should please the divine Majesty to defeat all by my death. It would have been more supportable, also, had I not been accompanied by others, who had been drawn on by my persuasions, and who in their distress cursed not only the hour of their coming, but the fear inspired by my words, which prevented their turning back, as they had at various times determined. Above all, my grief was doubled when I thought of my two sons, whom I had left at school in Cordova, destitute, in a strange land, without any testimony of the services rendered by their father, which if known, might have inclined your highnesses to befriend them. And although, on the one hand, I was comforted by a faith that the Deity would not permit a work of such great exaltation to his church, wrought through so many troubles and contradictions, to remain imperfect; yet, on the other hand, I reflected on my sins, for which he might intend as a punishment, that I should be deprived of the glory which would redound to me in this world*."

In the midst of these gloomy apprehensions an expedient suggested itself to Columbus, by which, though he and his ship should perish, the glory of his achievement might survive to his name, and its advantages be secured to his sovereigns. He wrote on parchment a brief account of his voyage and discovery, and of his having taken possession of the newly found lands in the name of their Catholic majesties. This he sealed and directed to the king and queen, and superscribed also a promise of a thousand ducats to whomever should deliver this pacquet unopened. He then wrapped it

* Hist. del Almirante, Cap. 36.

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in a waxed cloth, which he placed in the centre of a cake of wax, and enclosing the whole in a large barrel, threw it into the sea, giving his crew to suppose that he was performing some religious vow. Lest this memorial should never reach the land, he enclosed a copy in a similar manner, and placed it upon the poop, so that, should the caravel be swallowed up by the waves, the barrel might float off, and survive.

These precautions in some measure mitigated the anxiety of Columbus, and he was still more relieved when, after heavy showers, there appeared at sundown a streak of clear sky in the west, giving hopes that the wind was about to shift to that quarter. These hopes were confirmed: a favourable breeze succeeded, but the sea still ran so high and tumultuously that but little sail could be carried during the night.

On the morning of the 15th at daybreak, the cry of land was given by Rui Garcia, a mariner stationed in the main top. The transports of the crew at once more gaining sight of the old world, were almost equal to what they had experienced on first beholding the new. The land was seen east-northeast, directly over the prow of the caravel; and the usual diversity of opinion concerning it arose among the pilots. One thought that it must be the island of Madeira; another the rock of Cintra, near Lisbon; the most part, deceived by their ardent wishes, placed it near to Spain. Columbus, however, judging from his private reckonings and observations, concluded it to be one of the Azores. A nearer approach proved it to be an island; it was but five leagues distant, and the voyagers were congratulating themselves upon the assurance of speedily being in port, when suddenly the wind veered again to the east-northeast, blowing directly from the land, while a heavy sea kept rolling from the west.

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For two days they remained hovering in sight of the island, vainly striving to reach it, or to arrive at another island of which they caught glimpses occasionally through the mist and rack of the tempest. On the evening of the 17th they approached so near the first island they had seen, as to cast anchor, but they immediately parted their cable and had to put to sea again, where they remained beating about until the following morning, when they anchored under shelter of its northern side. For several days past Columbus had been in such a state of agitation and anxiety, that he had scarcely taken food or repose. Although suffering greatly from a gouty affection to which he was subject, yet he had maintained his watchful post on deck, exposed to wintry cold, to the pelting of the storm, and the drenching surges of the sea. It was not until the night of the 17th that he was enabled to get a little sleep, more from the exhaustion of nature than from any tranquillity of mind. Such were the difficulties and perils which attended his return to Europe; had one tenth part of them beset his outward voyage, his timid and factious crew would have risen in arms against the enterprize, and he never would have discovered the new world.

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CHAPTER III.

TRANSACTIONS AT THE ISLAND OF ST. MARY'S.

On sending the boat to land Columbus ascertained that the island where he had thus arrived was St. Mary's, the most southern of the Azores, and a possession of the crown of Portugal. The inhabitants, when they beheld the light caravel riding at anchor, were astonished that it had been able to live through the gale, which had raged for fifteen days with unexampled fury; but when they heard that this tempest-tost vessel brought tidings of a strange country beyond the ocean, they were filled with wonder and curiosity. To the inquiries of the boat's crew about a place where the caravel might anchor securely, they pointed out a harbour in the vicinity; but when the boat was about to depart, they prevailed on three of the mariners to remain on shore and gratify them with further particulars of this unparalleled voyage.

In the evening three men of the island hailed the caravel, and a boat being sent for them they brought on board fowls, bread and refreshments of various kinds, from Juan de Castiñada, governor of the island, who claimed an acquaintance with Columbus, and sent him many compliments and congratulations. He apologized for not coming in person, owing to the lateness of the hour and the distance of his residence, but promised to visit him the next morning, and to

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bring further refreshments, and the three men whom he still kept with him, to satisfy his extreme curiosity respecting the voyage. As there were no houses on the neighbouring shore the messengers remained on board all night.

On the following morning Columbus reminded his people of the vow made during their recent peril, to perform a pious procession at the first place where they should land. On the neighbouring shore, at no great distance from the sea, was a small hermitage or chapel dedicated to the virgin, which was favourable for the purpose, and he made immediate arrangements for the performance of the rite. The three messengers, on returning to the village, sent a priest to perform mass, and one half of the crew landing, walked in procession, barefooted and in their shirts, to the chapel; while the admiral awaited their return to perform the same ceremony with the remainder of his men.

An ungenerous reception, however, awaited the poor tempest-tost mariners, on their first return to the abode of civilized man, far distant from the sympathy and hospitality they had experienced among the savages of the new world. Scarcely had they begun their prayers and thanksgivings when the whole rabble of the village, horse and foot, headed by the governor, surrounded the hermitage and took them all prisoners.

As an intervening point of land hid the hermitage from the view of the caravel, the admiral remained in ignorance of this transaction. When eleven o'clock arrived without the return of the pilgrims, he began to fear that they were detained by the Portuguese, or that the boat had been shattered upon the surf-beaten rocks which bordered the island. Weighing anchor, therefore, he stood in a direction to command a view of the chapel and the adjacent shore. From hence he beheld a number of armed horsemen, who dis-

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mounting, entered the boat and made for the caravel. The admiral's ancient suspicions of Portuguese hostility towards himself and his enterprizes were immediately revived, and he ordered his men to arm themselves, but to keep out of sight, ready either to defend the vessel, or surprise the boat. The latter, however, approached in a pacific manner: the governor of the island was on board, and coming within hail, demanded assurance of personal safety in case he entered the caravel. This the admiral readily gave, but the Portuguese still distrustful, and conscious of their own sinister designs, continued to maintain a wary distance. The indignation of Columbus now broke forth: he reproached the governor with his perfidy, and with the wrong he did, not merely to the Spanish monarchs, but to his own sovereign, by such a dishonourable outrage; he informed him of his own rank and dignity, displaying his letters patent, sealed with the royal seal of Castile, and threatened him with the vengeance of his government. The reply of Castiñada was in an arrogant vein of contempt for the letters of the monarchs, and of defiance of Columbus; and he concluded by declaring that all he had done was in conformity to the commands of the king his sovereign.

After an unprofitable altercation, the boat returned to shore, leaving Columbus much perplexed by this unexpected hostility, and fearful that a war might have broken out between Spain and Portugal during his absence. The next day the weather became so tempestuous that they were driven from their anchorage and obliged to stand to sea, toward the island of St. Michael's. For two days the ship continued beating about, in great peril, half of her crew being detained on shore, and the greater part of those on board being landsmen and Indians, almost equally useless in difficult na-

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vigation. Fortunately, although the waves ran high, there were none of those cross seas which recently prevailed, otherwise, being so feebly manned, the caravel could scarcely have lived through the storm.

On the evening of the 22d, the weather having moderated, Columbus returned once more to his anchorage at St. Mary's. Shortly after his arrival a boat came off, bringing two priests and a notary. After a cautious parley, and an assurance of safety, they came on board of the caravel, and requested a sight of the papers of Columbus, on the part of Castiñada, assuring him that it was the disposition of the governor to render him every service in his power, provided he really sailed in the service of the Spanish sovereigns. Columbus saw that this was a mere manœuvre of Castiñada to cover a retreat from the hostile position he had assumed; he restrained his indignation, however, expressed his thanks for the friendly disposition of the governor, and showing his letters of commission, easily satisfied the priests and the notary. On the following morning the boat and mariners were liberated. The latter during their detention had collected information from the inhabitants which elucidated the conduct of Castiñada. The king of Portugal, jealous lest the expedition of Columbus might interfere with his own discoveries, had sent orders to his commanders of islands and distant ports, to seize and detain him, wherever he should be met with*. In compliance with these orders Castiñada had in the first instance hoped to surprise Columbus in the chapel, and failing in that attempt, had intended to get him in his power by stratagem, but was deterred from finding him on

* Hist. del Almirante, C. 39. Las Casas, Hist. Ind. L. 1, C. 72.

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his guard. Such was the first reception of the admiral on his return to the old world—an earnest of the crosses and troubles with which he was to be requited throughout life for one of the greatest benefits that ever man had conferred upon his fellow beings.

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CHAPTER IV.

ARRIVAL AT PORTUGAL—VISIT TO THE COURT.

1493. COLUMBUS remained two days longer at the island of St. Mary's, endeavouring to take in wood and ballast; but was prevented by the heavy surf which broke upon the shore. The wind veering to the south, and being dangerous for vessels at anchor off the island, but favourable for the voyage to Spain, he set sail on the 24th of February, and had pleasant weather until the 27th, when, being within one hundred and twenty-five leagues of Cape St. Vincent, he again encountered contrary gales, and a boisterous and laborious sea. The fortitude of Columbus was scarcely proof against these perils and delays, which appeared to increase the nearer he approached his home; and he could not help uttering a complaint at thus being repulsed, as it were, "from the very door of the house." He contrasted the rude storms which raged about the coasts of the old world, with the genial airs, the tranquil seas, and balmy weather, which he supposed perpetually to prevail about the favoured countries he had discovered. "Well," says he, "may the sacred theologians and sage philosophers declare, that the terrestrial paradise is in the ultimate end of the east, for it is the most temperate of regions."

After experiencing several days of stormy and adverse weather, about midnight of Saturday, the 2d March, the caravel was suddenly struck by a squall of wind, which rent

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all her sails; and continuing to blow with resistless violence, she was obliged again to scud under bare poles, threatened each moment with destruction. In this hour of darkness and peril, the crew again called upon the aid of heaven. A lot was cast for the performance of a barefooted pilgrimage to the shrine of Santa Maria de la Centa, in Huelva, and, as usual, the lot fell upon Columbus. There was something singular in the recurrence of this circumstance. Las Casas devoutly considers it an intimation from the Deity to the admiral, that these storms were all on his account, to humble his pride, and prevent his arrogating to himself the glory of a discovery, which was the work of God, and for which he had merely been chosen as an instrument*.

Various signs appeared of their being in the vicinity of land, which they supposed must be the coast of Portugal; the tempest however increased to such a degree, that they doubted whether any of them would survive to reach a port. The whole crew made a vow, in case their lives were spared, to fast upon bread and water the following Saturday. The turbulence of the elements was still greater in the course of the following night. The sea was broken, wild and mountainous; at one moment the light caravel was tost high in the air, and the next moment seemed sinking in a yawning abyss. The rain at times fell in torrents, and the lightning flashed, and the thunder pealed from various parts of the heavens.

In the first watch of this fearful night, the seamen gave the usually welcome cry of land; but it now only increased the general alarm. They knew not where they were, nor where to look for a harbour; they dreaded being driven on shore, or dashed upon the rocks; and thus the very

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind. Lib. 1, Cap. 73.

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land they had so earnestly desired, was rendered a terror to them. Taking in sail, therefore, they kept to sea as much as possible, and waited anxiously for the morning light.

At daybreak on the 4th of March, they found themselves off the rock of Cintra, at the mouth of the Tagus. Though entertaining a strong distrust of the good will of Portugal, the prevailing tempest left Columbus no alternative but to run in for shelter, and he accordingly anchored about three o'clock, opposite to Rastello, to the great joy of the crew, who returned thanks to God for their escape from so many perils.

The inhabitants came off from various parts of the shore, congratulating them upon what they considered a miraculous preservation. They had been watching the vessel the whole morning, with great anxiety, and putting up prayers for her safety. The oldest mariners of the place assured Columbus that they had never known so tempestuous a winter; many vessels had remained for months in port, weatherbound, and there had been numerous shipwrecks during the season.

Immediately on his arrival, Columbus dispatched a courier to the king and queen of Spain, with the great tidings of his discovery. He wrote also to the king of Portugal, who was then at Valparaiso, requesting permission to go with his vessel to Lisbon. A report had got abroad that his caravel was laden with gold, and he felt himself insecure in the mouth of the Tagus, in the neighbourhood of a place like Rastello, scantily peopled by needy and adventurous inhabitants. To prevent any misunderstanding as to the nature of his voyage, he assured the king that he had not been on the coast of Guinea, nor to any other of the Portuguese

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colonies, but had come from Cipango and the extremity of India, which he had discovered by sailing to the west.

On the following day, Don Alonzo de Acuña, the captain of a large Portuguese man of war stationed at Rastello, summoned Columbus on board his ship, to give an account of himself and his vessel. The latter immediately asserted his rights and dignities, as admiral of their Castilian majesties, and refused to leave his vessel, or to send any one in his place. No sooner, however, did the commander learn his rank, and the extraordinary nature of his voyage, than he came to the caravel with great sound of drums, fifes, and trumpets, showing Columbus the courtesies of a brave and generous spirit, and making the fullest offer of his services.

When the tidings reached Lisbon of this wonderful bark, which lay anchored in the Tagus, freighted with the people and the productions of a newly discovered world, the effect may be more easily conceived than described. Lisbon for nearly a century had derived its chief glory from its maritime discoveries, but here was an achievement that eclipsed them all. Curiosity could scarcely have been more excited had the vessel come freighted with the wonders of another planet. For several days the Tagus presented a gay and moving picture, covered with barges and boats of every kind, swarming round the caravel. From morning till night the vessel was thronged with visiters, among whom were cavaliers of high distinction, and various officers of the crown. All hung with rapt attention upon the accounts given by Columbus and his crew of the events of their voyage, and of the new world they had discovered; and gazed with insatiable curiosity upon the specimens of unknown plants and animals; but above all upon the Indians, so different from any race of men hitherto known. Some were filled with generous enthusiasm at the idea of a discovery so sub-

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lime, and so beneficial to mankind; the avarice of others was inflamed by the descriptions of wild unappropriated regions, teeming with gold, with pearls and spices, while others repined at the incredulity of the king and his counsellors, by which so immense an acquisition had been for ever lost to Portugal.

On the eighth of March, a cavalier, called Don Martin de Noroña, came with a letter from king John, congratulating Columbus on his arrival, and inviting him to court, which was then held at Valparaiso, about nine leagues from Lisbon. The king, with his usual munificence, issued orders at the same time, that every thing which the admiral required, for himself, his crew, or his vessel, should be furnished promptly and abundantly, without cost.

Columbus would gladly have declined the royal invitation, feeling distrust of the good faith of the king; but the tempestuous weather placed him in his power, and he thought it prudent to avoid all appearance of suspicion. He set forth, therefore, that very evening for Valparaiso, accompanied by his pilot. The first night he slept at Sacamben, where preparations had been made for his honourable entertainment. The weather being rainy he did not reach Valparaiso until the following night. On approaching the royal residence, the principal cavaliers of the king's household came forth to meet him, and attended him with great ceremony to the palace. His reception by the monarch was worthy of an enlightened prince. He ordered him to seat himself in his presence, an honour only accorded to persons of royal dignity; and after many congratulations on the glorious result of his enterprize, assured him that every thing in his kingdom that could be of service to his sovereigns or himself, was at his command.

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A long conversation ensued, in which Columbus gave an account of his voyage, and of the countries he had discovered. The king listened with much seeming pleasure, but with secret grief and mortification; the idea was incessantly preying upon his mind that this splendid enterprize had once been offered to himself, had in a manner been begging for patronage at his court, and had been rejected. A casual observation showed what was passing in his thoughts. He expressed a doubt whether the discovery did not really appertain to the crown of Portugal, according to the capitulations of the treaty of 1479, with the Castilian sovereigns. Columbus replied that he had never seen those capitulations, nor knew any thing of their nature; his orders had been not to go to La Mina, nor the coast of Guinea, which orders he had carefully observed. The king made a gracious reply, expressing himself satisfied that he had acted correctly, and persuaded that these matters would be readily adjusted between the two powers, without the need of umpires. On dismissing Columbus for the night, he gave him in charge, as guest, to the prior of Crato, the principal personage present, by whom he was honourably and hospitably entertained.

On the following day, the king had further conversation with the admiral, in which he made minute inquiries, as to the soil, productions, nd people of the newly discovered countries, and the route he had taken in his voyage; to all which the latter gave the fullest replies; endeavouring to convince the royal mind, in the clearest manner, that these were regions heretofore undiscovered and unappropriated by any Christian power. Still the king was uneasy, lest this vast and undefined discovery should in some way interfere with his own newly acquired territories. He doubted whether Columbus had not found a short way to those very countries

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which were the object of his own expeditions, and which were comprehended in the papal bull, granting to the crown of Portugal all the lands which it should discover from Cape Non to the Indias.

On suggesting these doubts to his counsellors, they eagerly confirmed them. Some of these were the very persons who had once derided this enterprize, and scoffed at Columbus as a dreamer. To them, its success was a source of confusion; every demonstration of its importance was felt as a reproach, and the return of Columbus, covered with glory, was a deep humiliation. Incapable of conceiving the high and generous thoughts which elevated him at that moment above all mean considerations, they attributed to all his actions the most petty and ignoble motives. His rational exultation was construed into an insulting triumph; and they accused him of assuming a boastful and vainglorious tone, when talking with the king of his discovery; as if he would revenge himself upon the monarch for having rejected his propositions*. It was with the greatest eagerness, therefore, that they sought to foster those doubts, which had sprung up in the royal mind. Some, who had seen the natives brought in the caravel, declared that their colour, hair,

* Vasconcelez, Vida de Don Juan, 11, lib. 6.

The Portuguese historians in general, charge Columbus with having conducted himself loftily, and talked in vaunting terms of his discoveries, in his conversations with the king. It is evident their information must have been derived from prejudiced courtiers. Faria y Souza, in his Europa Portuguesa (Parte III. C. 4,) goes so far as to say that Columbus entered into the port of Rastello merely to make Portugal sensible, by the sight of the trophies of his discovery, how much she had lost by not accepting his propositions.

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and manners, agreed with the descriptions of the people of that part of India which lay within the route of the Portuguese discoveries, and which had been included in the papal bull. Others observed that there was but little distance between the Tercera islands, and those which Columbus had discovered, and that the latter, therefore, clearly appertained to Portugal. Seeing the king deeply perturbed in spirit, some even went so far as to propose, as a means of impeding the prosecution of these enterprizes, that Columbus should be assassinated: declaring that he deserved death for attempting to deceive and embroil the two nations by his pretended discoveries. It was suggested that his assassination might easily be accomplished without incurring any odium: advantage might be taken of his lofty deportment to pique his pride, provoke him into an altercation, and then dispatch him, as if in casual and honourable encounter.

It is difficult to believe that such wicked and dastardly counsel could have been preferred to a monarch so upright as John II; but the fact is asserted by various historians, Portuguese as well as Spanish*; and it accords with the perfidious advice formerly given to the monarch in respect to Columbus. There is a spurious loyalty about courts, which is often prone to prove its zeal by its baseness, and it is the weakness of kings to tolerate the grossest faults that appear to arise from personal devotion.

Happily, the king had too much magnanimity to adopt the iniquitous measure proposed. He did justice to the great merit of Columbus, and honoured him as a distinguished benefactor to mankind: and he felt it his duty as a

* Vasconceles, Vida del Rei Don Juan II. L. 6. Garcia de Resende, Vida de Dom. Joam II. Las Casas, Hist. Ind. L. 1, C. 74. MS.

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generous prince, to protect all strangers, driven by adverse fortune to his ports. Others of his council suggested a more bold and martial line of policy. They advised that Columbus should be permitted to return to Spain; but that, before he could fit out a second expedition, a powerful armament should be dispatched, under the guidance of two Portuguese mariners, who had sailed with the admiral, to take possession of the newly discovered countries; possession being after all the best title, and an appeal to arms the clearest mode of settling so doubtful a question.

This counsel, in which there was a mixture of courage and craft, was more relished by the king, and he resolved privately, but promptly, to put it in execution, fixing upon Dom. Francisco de Almeida, one of the most distinguished captains of the age, to command the expedition*.

In the meantime, Columbus, after being treated with distinguished attention, was escorted back to his ship by Don Martin de Noroña and a numerous train of cavaliers of the court, a mule being provided for himself, and another for his pilot, to whom the king made a present of twenty Espadinos or ducats of gold†. On his way Columbus stopped at the monastery of St. Antonio, at Villa Franca, to visit the queen, who had expressed an earnest wish to see him. He found her attended by a few of her favourite ladies, and experienced the most flattering reception. Her majesty made him relate the principal events of his voyage, and describe the countries he had found, while she and her ladies hung with eager curiosity upon the narrative of this extraordinary and enterprizing man, whose achievement was the

* Vasconceles, L. 6.

† Or 28 dollars in gold of the present day, and equivalent to 74 dollars, considering the depreciation of the precious metals.

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theme of every tongue. That night he slept at Llandra, and being on the point of departing in the morning, a servant of the king arrived, offering, on the part of his majesty, to attend him to the frontier, if he preferred to return to Spain by land, and to provide horses, lodgings, and every thing he might stand in need of, at the royal expense. The weather, however, having moderated, he preferred returning in his caravel. Putting to sea once more, therefore, on the 13th March, he arrived safely at the bar of Saltes on sunrise of the 15th, and at mid-day entered the harbour of Palos, from whence he had sailed on the third of August in the preceding year; having taken not quite seven months and a half, to accomplish this most momentous of all maritime enterprizes*.

* Works generally consulted on this chapter—Las Casas, Hist. Ind. L. 1, C. 74. Hist. del Almirante, C. 39, 40, 41. Journal of Columb. Navarrete, T. 1.

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CHAPTER V.

RECEPTION OF COLUMBUS AT PALOS.

1493. THE triumphant return of Columbus was a prodigious event in the history of the little port of Palos; where every body was more or less interested in the fate of his expedition. The most important and wealthy sea-captains of the place had engaged in it, and scarcely a family but had some relative or friend among the voyagers. The departure of the ships upon what appeared a chimerical and desperate cruise, had spread gloom and dismay over the place; and the storms which had raged throughout the winter, had heightened the public despondency. Many lamented their friends as lost, while the imagination lent mysterious horrors to their fate; picturing them as driven about over wild and desert wastes of water without a shore; or as perishing amidst rocks, and quicksands, and whirlpools; or a prey to those monsters of the deep, with which credulity, in those days, peopled every distant and unfrequented sea*.

* In the maps and charts of those times, and even in those of a much later date, the variety of formidable and hideous monsters depicted in all remote parts of the ocean, evince the terrors and dangers with which the imagination clothed it. The same may also be said of distant and unknown lands. The remote parts of Asia and Africa have monsters depicted in them which it would be difficult to trace to any originals in natural history.

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There was something more awful in such a mysterious fate, than in death itself, under any defined and ordinary form.

When the news arrived, therefore, that one of the adventurous ships was standing up the river, the inhabitants were thrown into great agitation; but when they heard that she returned in triumph from the discovery of a world, and beheld her furling her sails in their harbour, the whole community burst forth into a transport of joy. The bells were rung, the shops shut, all business was suspended: for a time there was nothing but the hurry and tumult of sudden exultation and breathless curiosity. Some were anxious to know the fate of a relative, others of a friend; and all to learn particulars of so wonderful a voyage. When Columbus landed, the multitude thronged to see and welcome him, and a grand procession was formed to the principal church, to return thanks to God for so signal a discovery, made by the people of that place; the shallow populace forgetting, in their exultation, the thousand difficulties which they had thrown in the way of the enterprize. Wherever Columbus passed, the streets resounded with shouts and acclamations; he received such honours as are paid to sovereigns, but to him they were rendered with tenfold warmth and sincerity. What a contrast was this to his departure a few months before, followed by murmurs and execrations; or rather, what a contrast to his first arrival at Palos, a poor pedestrian, craving bread and water for his child at the gate of a convent!

Understanding that the court was at Barcelona, Columbus felt disposed to proceed thither immediately in his caravel; reflecting, however, on the dangers and disasters he had already experienced on the seas, he resolved to proceed by land. He dispatched a letter to the king and queen, informing them of his arrival, and soon after departed for Seville to await their orders; taking with him six of the natives

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whom he had brought from the new world. One had died at sea, and three were left ill at Palos.

It is a singular coincidence, which appears to be well authenticated, that on the very evening of the arrival of Columbus at Palos, and while, as it were, the peals of triumph were still ringing from its towers, the Pinta, commanded by Martin Alonzo Pinzon, likewise entered the river. After her separation from the admiral in the storm, she had been driven before the gale into the bay of Biscay, and had made the port of Bayonne. Doubting whether Columbus had survived the tempest, and, at all events, anxious to anticipate him, and to secure the favourable prepossessions of the court and the public, Pinzon had immediately written to the sovereigns, giving information of the discovery he had made, and had requested permission to come to court, and communicate the particulars in person. As soon as the weather permitted, he had again set sail, anticipating a triumphant reception in his native port of Palos. When, on entering the harbour, he beheld the vessel of the admiral riding at anchor, and learnt the enthusiasm with which he had been received, and the rejoicings with which his return had been celebrated, the heart of Pinzon died within him. He called to mind his frequent arrogance and insubordination, and his wilful desertion off the coast of Cuba, by which he had impeded the prosecution of the voyage. It is said that he feared to meet Columbus in this hour of his triumph, lest he might put him under arrest; but it is more probable that he was ashamed to appear before the public in the midst of its rejoicings, as a recreant to the cause which excited such universal admiration. Getting into his boat, therefore, he landed privately, and kept himself out of sight until he heard of the admiral's departure. He then returned to his home, broken in health and deeply dejected. Palos had been his little world, in

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which he had moved with unrivalled importance; but now he found himself fallen in public opinion, and fancied the finger of scorn continually pointed at him. All the honours lavished on Columbus, all the rapturous eulogiums of his enterprize, sunk into the soul of Pinzon, as so many reproaches on himself; and when, at length, he received a severe and reproachful reply to the letter he had written to the sovereigns, his morbid feelings added virulence to his malady, and in a few days he sunk into the grave, the victim of humiliation and remorse*.

He was a man of great spirit and enterprize, one of the ablest seamen of the age, and the head of a family that continued to distinguish itself among the early discoverers. He had contributed greatly to encourage Columbus, when poor and unknown in Spain; offering his purse, and entering with hearty concurrence into his plans. He had assisted him by his personal influence at Palos; combating the public prejudices, and promoting the manning and equipping of his vessels, when even the orders of the sovereigns were of no avail; he had advanced the part of the funds to be borne by the admiral; finally, he had embarked, with his brothers, in the expedition, staking life as well as property on the event. He had thus entitled himself to participate largely in the glory of this immortal enterprize, but, forgetting for a moment the grandeur of the cause, he had deserted the high object in view; and by yielding to the impulse of a low and sordid passion, had tarnished his character for ever. That he was a man naturally of generous sentiments, is evident from the poignancy of his remorse: a mean man could not have fallen a victim to self-upbraiding for having committed

* Muñoz, Hist. N. Mundo, L. 4, § 14. Charlevoix, Hist. S. Doming. L. 2.

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a mean action. His story shows how one lapse from duty may counterbalance the merits of a thousand services; how one moment of weakness may mar the beauty of a whole life of virtue; and how important it is for a man, under all circumstances, to be true, not merely to others, but to himself*.

* The children and heirs of Martin Alonzo Pinzon showed in subsequent years a great animosity against Columbus: seeking in various ways to depreciate the merit of his discoveries, or to gain the credit of it to their father. Among other extravagancies, it was asserted that, before the sovereigns accepted the proposition of Columbus, Pinzon had prepared to go at his own cost and risk, in two of his own ships, in search of lands in the west, of which he had some notice from papers found in the Papal library at Rome, and also from a prophecy of the time of Solomon, in which it was written that, navigating from Spain westward, by a temperate course between north and south, at ninety-five degrees of longitude, would be found the fertile and abundant island of Cipango. Muñoz. Hist. N. Mundo, L. 4. § 14.

It may not be uninteresting here to insert a few particulars concerning Palos and the Pinzons, furnished me by a friend, and which he had gathered in a voyage on board of the steam boat between Seville and Cadiz. "On my way down the river," says he, "I found a sailor on board, a native of Huelva. He was intelligent for his situation, and I gathered from him the following information, which may be depended upon. Palos is dwindled to a paltry village of about four hundred inhabitants, and has only four or five barks, which are employed in fishing. The neighbouring town of Huelva has greatly increased, and chiefly at its expense. La Rabida, the monastery of Franciscans, still exists, and is inhabited by friars of that order. It is situated on a hill that overlooks the low sand plains of the surrounding country. The family of the Pinzons removed long since to Huelva, where there are now four or five branches of them. They are not wealthy. They venerate

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the memory of their ancestor, and preserve some documents in his hand writing. They also follow his profession. Near San Lucar the sailor pointed out to me a small trim-looking felucca, commanded by a young Pinzon of that family. The same sailor mentioned to me incidentally, that he had been employed in Seville to fit an awning to the house of a canon, the last descendant of Hernando Cortes.

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CHAPTER VI.

RECEPTION OF COLUMBUS BY THE SPANISH COURT AT BARCELONA.

THE letter of Columbus to the Spanish monarchs, announcing his discovery, had produced the greatest sensation at court. The event it communicated was considered the most extraordinary of their prosperous reign; and following so close upon the conquest of Granada, was pronounced a signal mark of divine favour, for that triumph achieved in the cause of the true faith. The sovereigns themselves were for a time dazzled and bewildered by this sudden and easy acquisition of a new empire, of indefinite extent, and apparently boundless wealth; and their first idea was to secure it beyond the reach of question or competition. Shortly after his arrival in Seville, Columbus received a letter from them, expressing their great delight, and requesting him to repair immediately to court, to concert plans for a second and more extensive expedition. As the summer was already advancing, the time favourable for a voyage, they desired him to make any arrangements at Seville, or elsewhere, that might hasten the expedition, and to inform them by the return of the courier, what was necessary to be done on their part. This letter was addressed to him by the title of "Don Christopher Columbus, our admiral of the Ocean sea, and viceroy and governor of the islands discovered in

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the Indias;" at the same time he was promised still further rewards. Columbus lost no time in complying with the commands of the sovereigns. He sent a memorandum of the ships, men and munitions that would be requisite; and having made such dispositions at Seville as circumstances permitted, set out on his journey for Barcelona, taking with him the six Indians, and the various curiosities and productions which he had brought from the new world.

The fame of his discovery had resounded throughout the nation, and as his route lay through several of the finest and most populous provinces of Spain, his journey appeared like the progress of a sovereign. Wherever he passed, the surrounding country poured forth its inhabitants, who lined the road and thronged the villages. In the large towns, the streets, windows and balconies, were filled with eager spectators, who rent the air with acclamations. His journey was continually impeded by the multitude pressing to gain a sight of him, and of the Indians, who were regarded with as much admiration as if they had been natives of another planet. It was impossible to satisfy the craving curiosity which assailed himself and his attendants, at every stage, with innumerable questions; popular rumour, as usual, had exaggerated the truth, and had filled the newly found country with all kinds of wonders.

It was about the middle of April that Columbus arrived at Barcelona, where every preparation had been made to give him a solemn and magnificent reception. The beauty and serenity of the weather in that genial season, and favoured climate, contributed to give splendour to this memorable ceremony. As he drew near the place, many of the more youthful courtiers, and hidalgos of gallant bearing, together with a vast concourse of the populace, came forth to meet and welcome him. His entrance into this noble city has been

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compared to one of those triumphs which the Romans were accustomed to decree to conquerors. First were paraded the Indians, painted according to their savage fashion, and decorated with tropical feathers, and with their national ornaments of gold; after these were borne various kinds of live parrots, together with stuffed birds and animals of unknown species, and rare plants supposed to be of precious qualities: while great care was taken to make a conspicuous display of Indian coronets, bracelets, and other decorations of gold, which might give an idea of the wealth of the newly discovered regions. After these followed Columbus, on horseback, surrounded by a brilliant cavalcade of Spanish chivalry. The streets were almost impassable from the countless multitude; the windows and balconies were crowded with the fair; the very roofs were covered with spectators. It seemed as if the public eye could not be sated with gazing on these trophies of an unknown world; or on the remarkable man by whom it had been discovered. There was a sublimity in this event that mingled a solemn feeling with the public joy. It was looked upon as a vast and signal dispensation of providence in reward for the piety of the monarchs; and the majestic and venerable appearance of the discoverer, so different from the youth and buoyancy that are generally expected from roving enterprize, seemed in harmony with the grandeur and dignity of his achievement.

To receive him with suitable pomp and distinction, the sovereigns had ordered their throne to be placed in public, under a rich canopy of brocade of gold, in a vast and splendid saloon. Here the king and queen awaited his arrival, seated in state, with the prince Juan beside them; and attended by the dignitaries of their court, and the principal nobility of Castile, Valentia, Catalonia and Arragon; all impatient to behold the man who had conferred so incalcu-

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lable a benefit upon the nation. At length Columbus entered the hall, surrounded by a brilliant crowd of cavaliers, among whom, says Las Casas, he was conspicuous for his stately and commanding person, which, with his countenance rendered venerable by his gray hairs, gave him the august appearance of a senator of Rome. A modest smile lighted up his features, showing that he enjoyed the state and glory in which he came*; and certainly nothing could be more deeply moving to a mind inflamed by noble ambition, and conscious of having greatly deserved, than these testimonials of the admiration and gratitude of a nation, or rather of a world. As Columbus approached, the sovereigns rose, as if receiving a person of the highest rank. Bending his knees, he requested to kiss their hands; but there was some hesitation on the part of their majesties to permit this act of vassalage. Raising him in the most gracious manner, they ordered him to seat himself in their presence; a rare honour in this proud and punctilious court†.

At the request of their majesties, Columbus now gave an account of the most striking events of his voyage, and a description of the islands which he had discovered. He displayed the specimens he had brought of unknown birds and other animals; of rare plants of medicinal and aromatic virtue; of native gold in dust, in crude masses, or laboured into barbaric ornaments; and above all, the natives of these countries, who were objects of intense and inexhaustible interest; since there is nothing to man so curious as the varieties of his own species. All these he pronounced mere harbingers of greater discoveries he had yet to make; which would add realms of incalculable wealth to the dominions of

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind. L. 1, C. 78, MS.

† Idem. Hist. del Almirante, Cap. 41.

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their majesties, and whole nations of proselytes to the true faith.

The words of Columbus were listened to with profound emotion by the sovereigns. When he had finished, they sunk on their knees, and, raising their clasped hands to heaven, their eyes filled with tears of joy and gratitude, they poured forth thanks and praises to God for so great a providence. All present followed their example; a deep and solemn enthusiasm pervaded that splendid assembly, and prevented all common acclamations of triumph: the anthem of *te deum laudamus*, chanted by the choir of the royal chapel, with the melodious responses of the minstrels, rose up from the midst in a full body of sacred harmony, bearing up, as it were, the feelings and thoughts of the auditors to heaven, "so that," says the venerable Las Casas, "it seemed as if in that hour they communicated with celestial delights." Such was the solemn and pious manner in which the brilliant court of Spain celebrated this sublime event; offering up a grateful tribute of melody and praise, and giving glory to God for the discovery of another world.

When Columbus retired from the royal presence he was attended to his residence by all the court, and followed by the shouting populace. For many days he was the object of universal curiosity, and wherever he appeared he was surrounded by an admiring multitude.

While the mind of Columbus was thus teeming with glorious anticipations, his pious scheme for the deliverance of the holy sepulchre was not forgotten. It has been shown that he suggested it to the Spanish sovereigns at the time of first making his propositions, holding it forth as the great object to be effected by the profits of his discoveries. Flushed with the idea of the vast wealth that was now to accrue to himself, he made a vow to furnish an army, within seven

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years, consisting of five thousand horse, and fifty thousand foot, for the rescue of the holy sepulchre, and a similar force within the five following years. This vow was recorded in one of his letters to the sovereigns, to which he refers, but which is no longer extant; nor is it certain whether it was made at the end of his first voyage, or at a subsequent date, when the magnitude and wealthy result of his discoveries became more fully manifest. He often alludes to it vaguely in his writings, and he refers to it expressly in a letter to Pope Alexander VI, written in 1502, in which he accounts also for its nonfulfilment. It is essential to a full comprehension of the character and motives of Columbus, that this wild and visionary project should be borne in recollection. It will be found to have entwined itself in his mind with his enterprize of discovery, and that a holy crusade was to be the consummation of those divine purposes for which he considered himself selected by heaven as an agent. It shows how much his mind was elevated above selfish and mercenary views. How it was filled with those devout and heroic schemes, which in the time of the crusades had inflamed the thoughts, and directed the enterprizes; of the bravest warriors and most illustrious princes.

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CHAPTER VII.

SOJOURN OF COLUMBUS AT BARCELONA—ATTENTIONS PAID HIM BY THE SOVEREIGNS AND COURTIERS.

1493. THE joy occasioned by this great discovery was not confined to Spain. The tidings were spread far and wide by embassies, by the correspondence of the learned, by the negociations of merchants, and the reports of travellers. Allegretto Allegretti, a contemporary writer, in his annals of Sienna, for 1493, mentions it as just made known at that court by the letters of their merchants who were in Spain, and by the mouths of various travellers*. The news was brought to Genoa by the return of her ambassadors Francisco Marchesi† and Giovanni Antonio Grimaldi, and was recorded among the triumphant events of the year. The republic, though she may have slighted the opportunity of making herself mistress of the discovery, has ever since been tenacious of the glory of having given birth to the discoverer. Sebastian Cabot mentions, that he was in London when news was brought there of the discovery, and that it caused great talk and admiration in the court of Henry VII, being affirmed "to be a thing more divine than human‡."

* Diarj Savesi de Alleg. Allegretti. Muratori Ital. Script. T. 23.

† Foglieta, Istoria de Genona, L. 2.

‡ Hackluyt, Collect. Voyages, V. 3, p. 7.

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The whole civilized world, in fact, was filled with wonder and delight. Every one rejoiced in it, as an event in which he was more or less interested; and as opening a new and unbounded field for inquiry and enterprize. Of the exultation of the learned, we have a proof in a letter of Peter Martyr to his friend Pomponius Lœtus. "You tell me, my amiable Pomponius," he writes, "that you leaped for joy, and that your delight was mingled with tears, when you read my epistles, certifying to you the hitherto hidden world of the antipodes. You have felt and acted as became a man distinguished for learning. What aliment more delicious than such tidings can be set before an ingenuous mind! I feel a happiness of spirit when I converse with intelligent people who have returned from these regions. It is like an accession of wealth to a miser. Our minds, soiled with vices, become meliorated by contemplating such glorious merits*."

Notwithstanding all this triumph, however, no one as yet was aware of the real importance of this discovery. No one had an idea that this was a totally distinct portion of the globe, separated by oceans from the ancient world. The opinion of Columbus was universally adopted, that Cuba was the end of the Asiatic continent, and that the adjacent islands were in the Indian seas. This agreed with the opinions of the ancients, heretofore cited about the moderate distance from Spain to the extremity of India, sailing westwardly. The parrots were also thought to resemble those described by Pliny, as abounding in the remote parts of Asia. The lands, therefore, which Columbus had visited were called the West Indias; and as he seemed to have entered upon a vast region of unexplored countries, existing

* Letters of P. Martyr, Let. 153.

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in a state of nature, the whole received the comprehensive appellation of "The New World."

During the whole of his sojourn at Barcelona, the sovereigns took every occasion to bestow on Columbus personal marks of their high consideration. He was admitted at all times to the royal presence, and the queen delighted to converse with him on the subject of his enterprizes. The king too, appeared occasionally on horseback, with prince Juan on one side, and Columbus on the other. To perpetuate in his family the glory of his achievement, a coat of arms was assigned him, in which the royal arms, the castle and lion, were quartered with his proper bearings, which were a group of islands surrounded by waves. To these arms was afterwards annexed the motto:

Por Castilla y por Leon,
Nuevo mundo halló Colon.

(For Castile and Leon
Columbus found a new world.)

The pension of thirty crowns*, which had been decreed by the sovereigns to him who in the first voyage should discover land, was adjudged to Columbus, for having first seen the light on the shore. It is said that the seaman who first descried the land, was so incensed at being disappointed of what he conceived his merited reward, that he renounced his country and his faith, and going into Africa turned Mussulman; an anecdote which rests merely on the authority of Oviedo, who is extremely incorrect in his narration of this voyage, and inserts many falsehoods told him by the enemies of the admiral.

* Equal to a value in gold of 39 dollars, and equivalent to 117 dollars in our day.

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It may, at first sight, appear but little accordant with the acknowledged magnanimity of Columbus, to have borne away the prize from this poor sailor, but this was a subject in which his whole ambition was involved, and he was doubtless proud of the honour of being personally the discoverer of the land as well as projector of the enterprize.

Next to the countenance shown him by the king and queen, may be mentioned that of Pedro Gonzalez de Mendoza, the grand cardinal of Spain, and first subject of the realm; a man whose elevated character for piety, learning, and high prince-like qualities, gave signal value to his favours. He invited Columbus to a banquet, where he assigned him the most honourable place at table, and had him served with the ceremonials which in those punctilious times were observed towards sovereigns. At this repast is said to have occurred the well known anecdote of the egg. A shallow courtier present, impatient of the honours paid to Columbus, and meanly jealous of him as a foreigner, abruptly asked him whether he thought that, in case he had not discovered the Indias, there were not other men in Spain, who would have been capable of the enterprize? To this Columbus made no immediate reply, but, taking an egg, invited the company to make it stand upon one end. Every one attempted it, but in vain; whereupon he struck it upon the table so as to break the end, and left it standing on the broken part; illustrating in this simple manner, that when he had once shown the way to the new world, nothing was easier than to follow it*.

* This anecdote rests on the authority of the Italian historian Benzoni, (lib. 1, p. 12, ed. Venetia, 1572.) It has been condemned as trivial, but the simplicity of the reproof constitutes its severity, and was characteristic of the practical sagacity of Columbus. The universal popularity of the anecdote is a proof of its merit.

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The favour shown Columbus by the sovereigns ensured him for a time the caresses of the nobility; for in a court every one vies with his neighbour in lavishing attentions upon the man "whom the king delighteth to honour." Columbus bore all these caresses and distinctions with becoming modesty, though he must have felt a proud satisfaction in the idea that they had been wrested, as it were, from the nation by his courage and perseverance. One can hardly recognize in the individual thus made the companion of princes, and the theme of general wonder and admiration, the same obscure stranger who but a short time before had been a common scoff and jest in this very court, derided by some as an adventurer, and pointed at by others as a madman. Those who had treated him with contumely during his long course of solicitation, now sought to efface the remembrance of it by blandishments. Every one who had given him a little cold countenance, and a few courtly smiles, now arrogated to himself the credit of having been a patron and of having promoted the discovery of the new world. Scarce a great man about the court, but has been enrolled by his historian or biographer among the benefactors of Columbus; though, had one tenth part of this boasted patronage been really exerted he would never have had to linger seven years soliciting for an armament of three carayels. Columbus knew well the weakness of the patronage that had been given him. The only friends mentioned by him with gratitude, in his after letters, as having been really zealous and effective, were those two worthy friars, Diego de Deza, afterwards bishop of Palencia and Seville, and Juan Perez, the prior of the convent of La Rabida.

Thus honoured by the sovereigns, courted by the great, idolized by the people, Columbus, for a time, drank the honied draught of popularity, before enmity and detraction

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had time to drug it with bitterness. His discovery burst with such sudden splendour upon the world, as to dazzle envy itself, and to call forth the general acclamations of mankind. Well would it be for the honour of human nature, could history, like romance, close with the consummation of the hero's wishes; we should then leave Columbus in the full fruition of great and well merited prosperity. But his history is destined to furnish another proof, if proof be wanting, of the inconstancy of public favour, even when won by distinguished services. No greatness was ever acquired by more incontestible, unalloyed, and exalted benefits rendered to mankind, yet none ever drew on its possessor more unremitting jealousy and defamation, or involved him in more unmerited distress and difficulty. Thus it is with illustrious merit; its very effulgence draws forth the rancorous passions of low and grovelling minds, which too often have a temporary influence in obscuring it to the world; as the sun, emerging with full splendour into the heavens, calls up, by the very fervour of his rays, the rank and noxious vapours which for a time becloud his glory.

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CHAPTER VIII.

PAPAL BULL OF PARTITION—PREPARATIONS FOR A SECOND VOYAGE OF COLUMBUS.

1493. In the midst of their rejoicings, the Spanish sovereigns lost no time in taking every measure necessary to secure their new acquisitions. Although it was supposed that the countries just discovered were part of the territories of the Grand Khan, and of other oriental princes, considerably advanced in civilization, yet there does not appear to have been the least doubt of the right of their Catholic majesties to take possession of them. During the crusades, a doctrine had been established among the Christian princes extremely favourable to their ambitious designs. According to this, they had the right to invade, ravage and seize upon the territories of all infidel nations, under the plea of defeating the enemies of Christ, and extending the sway of his holy church on earth. In conformity to the same doctrine, the pope, from his supreme authority over all temporal things, was considered as empowered to dispose of all heathen lands, to such pious potentates as would engage to reduce them to the dominion of the church, and to propagate the true faith among their benighted inhabitants. It was in virtue of this power, that Pope Martin V, and his successors, had conceded to the crown of Portugal all the lands it might discover from Cape Bojador to the Indias; and the Catholic

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sovereigns, in a treaty concluded in 1479, with the Portuguese monarch, had engaged themselves to respect the territorial rights thus acquired. It was to this treaty that John II alluded, in his conversation with Columbus, wherein he suggested his title to the newly discovered countries.

On the first intelligence received from the admiral of his success, therefore, the Spanish sovereigns took the immediate precaution to secure the sanction of the pope. Alexander VI had recently been elevated to the holy chair; a pontiff whom some historians have stigmatized with every vice and crime that could disgrace humanity, but whom all have represented as eminently able and politic. He was a native of Valentia, and being born a subject of the crown of Arragon, it might be inferred was favourably disposed to Ferdinand; but in certain questions which had come before him, he had already shown a disposition not the most cordial towards the Catholic monarch. At all events, Ferdinand was well aware of his worldly and perfidious character, and endeavoured to manage him accordingly. He dispatched ambassadors, therefore, to the court of Rome, announcing the new discovery as an extraordinary triumph of the faith: setting forth the great glory and gain which must redound to the church, from the dissemination of the Catholic doctrines throughout these vast and heathen lands. Care was also taken to state that the present discovery did not in the least interfere with the possessions ceded by the holy chair to Portugal, all which had been sedulously avoided. Ferdinand, who was at least as politic as he was pious, insinuated a hint at the same time, by which the pope might perceive that he was determined, at all events, to maintain his important acquisitions. His ambassadors were instructed to state that, in the opinion of many learned men, these newly discovered lands, having been taken possession of by the Cas-

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tilian sovereigns, their title to the same did not require the papal sanction; still, as pious princes, obedient to the holy chair, they supplicated his holiness to issue a bull, making a concession of them, and of such others as might be discovered, to the crown of Castile.

The tidings of the discovery were received in fact with great astonishment and no less exultation by the court of Rome. The Spanish sovereigns had already elevated themselves to high consequence in the eyes of the church, by their war against the Moors of Spain, which had been considered in the light of a pious crusade; and though richly repaid by the acquisition of the kingdom of Granada, was thought to entitle them to the gratitude of all Christendom. The present discovery was a still grander achievement; it was the fulfilment of one of the sublime promises to the church; it was giving to it "the heathen for an inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for a possession." No difficulty therefore was made in granting, what was considered but a modest request, for so important a service; though it is probable the acquiescence of the worldly minded pontiff was quickened by the insinuations of the politic monarch.

A bull was accordingly issued, dated May 2d, 1493, ceding to the Spanish sovereigns the same rights, privileges, and indulgences, in respect to the newly discovered regions, as had been accorded to the Portuguese, with regard to their African discoveries, under the same condition of planting and propagating the Catholic faith. To prevent any conflicting claims, however, between the two powers, in the wide range of their discoveries, another bull was issued on the following day, containing the famous line of demarcation, by which their territories were thought to be clearly and permanently defined. This was an ideal line drawn from the north to the south pole, a hundred leagues to the west of the

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Azores, and the Cape de Verd islands. All land discovered by the Spanish navigators to the west of this line, and which had not been taken possession of by any Christian power before the preceding Christmas, was to belong to the Spanish crown: all land discovered in the contrary direction was to belong to Portugal. It seems never to have occurred to the pontiff, that by pushing their opposite careers of discovery, they might some day or other come again in collision, and renew the question of territorial right at the antipodes.

In the meantime, without waiting for the sanction of the court of Rome, the utmost exertions were made by the sovereigns to fit out a second expedition. To ensure regularity and dispatch in the affairs relative to the new world, they were placed under the superintendance of Juan Rodriguez de Fonseca, archdeacon of Seville, who afterwards rose to be successively bishop of Badajoz, Palencia and Burgos, and finally patriarch of the Indias. He was a man of family and influence; his brothers Alonzo and Antonio were seniors or lords of Coca and Alaejos, and the latter was comptroller general of Castile. Juan Rodriguez de Fonseca is represented by Las Casas as a worldly man, more calculated for temporal than spiritual concerns; and well adapted to the bustling occupations of fitting out and manning armadas. Notwithstanding the high ecclesiastical dignities to which he arose, his worldly employments seem never to have been considered incompatible with his sacred functions. Enjoying a perpetual, though unmerited, favour of the sovereigns, he maintained a control of India affairs for about thirty years. He must undoubtedly have possessed talents for business to ensure him such perpetuity of office; but he was malignant and vindictive; and in the gratification of his private resentments, he not only heaped wrongs and sorrows upon the most illustrious of the early discover-

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ers, but frequently impeded the progress of their enterprises, to the great detriment of the crown. This he was enabled to do privately and securely by his official situation. His perfidious conduct is repeatedly alluded to, but in guarded terms, by contemporary writers of weight and credit, such as the curate of Los Palacios, and the bishop Las Casas; but they evidently were cautious of speaking the fulness of their feelings. Subsequent Spanish historians, always more or less controlled by ecclesiastical supervision, have likewise dealt too favourably with this base minded man. He merits to be held up as a warning example of those perfidious beings in office, who too often lie like worms at the root of honourable enterprize, blighting by their unseen influence the fruits of glorious action, and disappointing the hopes of nations.

To assist Fonseca in his new duties, Francesco Pinelo was associated with him as treasurer, and Juan de Soria as contador, or comptroller. Their office for the transaction of India affairs was fixed at Seville; extending its vigilance, at the same time, to the port of Cadiz, where a custom-house was established for this new branch of navigation. Such was the germ of the royal India House, which afterwards rose to such great power and importance. A correspondent office was ordered to be instituted in Hispaniola, under the direction of the admiral. These offices were to interchange registers of the cargoes, crews and munitions of each ship, by accountants who sailed with it. All persons thus employed were dependent upon the two comptrollers general, superior ministers of the royal revenue; since the crown was to be at all the expenses of the colony, and to receive all the emoluments.

The most minute and rigorous account was to be exacted of all expenses and proceeds: and the most vigilant caution

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observed as to the persons employed in the concerns of the newly discovered lands. No one was permitted to go there, either to trade, or to form an establishment, without express license from the sovereigns, from Columbus, or from Fonseca, under the heaviest penalties. The ignorance of the age as to enlarged principles of commerce, and the example of the Portuguese in respect to their African possessions, have been cited in excuse of the narrow and jealous spirit here manifested; but it always more or less influenced the policy of Spain in her colonial regulations.

Another instance of the despotic sway maintained by the crown over commerce, is manifested in a royal order, that all ships in the ports of Andalusia, with their captains, pilots, and crews, should be held in readiness to serve in this expedition. Columbus and Fonseca were authorized to freight or purchase any of those vessels they might think proper, and to take them by force, if refused, even though they had been freighted by other persons; paying what they should conceive a reasonable price. They were furthermore authorized to take the requisite provisions, arms, and ammunition, from any place or vessel in which they might be found, paying a fair price to the owners; and they might compel not merely mariners, but any officer of any office whatever, whom they should deem necessary to the service, to embark in the fleet, on a reasonable pay and salary. The civil authorities, and all persons of rank and standing, were called upon to render all required aid in expediting the armament, and warned against causing any impediment, under penalty of privation of office, and confiscation of estate.

To provide for the expenses of the expedition, the royal revenue arising from two thirds of the church tythes, was placed at the disposition of Pinelo; other funds were drawn from a disgraceful source, from the jewels and other valua-

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bles, the sequestrated property of the unfortunate Jews banished from the kingdom, according to a bigot edict of the preceding year. As these resources were still inadequate, Pinelo was authorized to raise the deficiency by a loan. Requisitions were likewise made for provisions of all kinds, as well as for artillery, powder, muskets, lances, corselets, and crossbows. This latter weapon, notwithstanding the introduction of firearms, was still preferred by many to the arquebus, and considered more formidable and destructive; the other having to be used with a matchlock, and being so heavy as to require an iron rest. The military stores, which had accumulated during the war with the Moors of Granada, furnished a great part of these supplies. Almost all the preceding orders were issued by the 23d of May, while Columbus was yet at Barcelona. Rarely has there been witnessed such a scene of activity in the dilatory offices of Spain.

As the conversion of the Gentiles was professed to be the grand object of these discoveries, twelve zealous and able ecclesiastics were chosen for the purpose, to accompany the expedition. Among these was Bernardo Buyl or Boyl, a Benedictine monk of talents and reputed sanctity, but one of those subtle politicians of the cloister, who in those days glided into all temporal concerns. He had acquitted himself with address in recent negociations with France, relative to the restitution of Rouissillon. Before the sailing of the fleet, he was appointed by the pope his apostolical vicar for the new world, and placed as superior over his ecclesiastical brethren. This pious mission was provided with all things necessary for the dignified performance of its functions; the queen supplying, from her own chapel, the ornaments and vestments to be used in all solemn ceremonies. Isabella, from the first, took the most warm and compassionate interest in the welfare of the Indians. Won by the accounts given

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by Columbus of their gentleness and simplicity, and looking upon them as committed by heaven to her especial care, her pious heart was filled with concern at their destitute and ignorant condition. She ordered that great care should be taken of their religious instruction, that they should be treated with the utmost kindness, and enjoined Columbus to inflict signal punishment on all Spaniards who should be guilty of outrage or injustice towards them.

By way, as it was said, of offering to heaven the first fruits of these pagan nations, the six Indians whom Columbus had brought to Barcelona, were baptized with great state and ceremony: the king, the queen, and Prince Juan officiating as sponsors. Great hopes were entertained that, on their return to their native country, they would facilitate the introduction of Christianity among their countrymen. One of them, at the request of Prince Juan, remained in his household, but died not long afterwards; a Spanish historian remarks that, according to what ought to be our pious belief, he was the first of his nation that entered heaven*.

Before the departure of Columbus from Barcelona, the provisional agreement made at Santa Fé was confirmed, granting him the titles, emoluments, and prerogatives of admiral, viceroy, and governor, of all the countries he had discovered or might discover. He was intrusted also with the royal seal, with authority to use the names of their majesties, in granting letters patent and commissions within the bounds of his jurisdiction; with the right also, in case of absence, to appoint a person in his place, and to invest him for the time with the same powers.

It had been premised in the agreement, that, for all vacant offices in the government of the islands and main land,

* Herrera, Hist. Ind. Decad 1. L. 2. Cap. 5.

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he should nominate three candidates, out of which number the sovereigns should make a choice; but now, to save time, and to show their confidence in Columbus, they empowered him to appoint, at once, such persons as he thought proper, who were to hold their offices during the royal pleasure. He had likewise the title and command of captain general of the armament about to sail, with unqualified powers as to the government of the crews, the establishments to be formed in the new world, and the ulterior discoveries to be undertaken.

This was the honey-moon of royal favour, during which Columbus enjoyed the unbounded and well merited confidence of his sovereigns, before envious minds had dared to insinuate a doubt of his integrity. After receiving every mark of public honour and private regard, he took leave of the sovereigns on the 28th of May; the whole court accompanied him from the palace to his dwelling, and attended also to pay him farewell honours, on his departure from Barcelona for Seville.

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CHAPTER IX.

DIPLOMATIC NEGOCIATIONS BETWEEN THE COURTS OF SPAIN AND PORTUGAL, WITH RESPECT TO THE NEW DISCOVERIES.

1493. THE anxiety of the Spanish monarchs for the speedy departure of the expedition, was heightened by the proceedings of the court of Portugal. John II had unfortunately among his counsellors, certain politicians of that short-sighted class, who mistake craft for wisdom. By adopting their perfidious policy, he had lost the new world, when it was an object of honourable enterprize; in compliance with their advice, he now sought to retrieve it by subtle stratagem. He had accordingly prepared a large armament, the avowed object of which was an expedition to Africa, but its real destination to seize upon the newly discovered countries. To lull suspicion, Don Ruy de Sande was sent ambassador to the Spanish court, requesting permission to procure certain prohibited articles from Spain, for this African voyage. He required also that the Spanish sovereigns should forbid their subjects to fish beyond Cape Bojador, until the possessions of the two nations should be properly defined. The discovery of Columbus, the real object of solicitude, was treated as an incidental affair. The manner of his arrival and reception in Portugal was mentioned; the congratulations of King John on the happy result of his voyage;

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his satisfaction at finding that the admiral had been instructed to steer westward from the Canary islands; and his hope that the Castilian sovereigns would continue to enjoin a similar route upon their voyagers; all to the south of those islands being granted by papal bull to the crown of Portugal. He concluded by intimating the entire confidence of King John, that should it appear that any of the newly discovered islands appertained by right to Portugal, the matter would be adjusted in that spirit of amity which existed between the two crowns.

Ferdinand was too wary a politician to be easily deceived. He had received early intelligence of the real designs of King John, and, before the arrival of his ambassador, he had himself dispatched Don Lope de Herrera to the Portuguese court, furnished with double instructions, and with two letters of widely opposite tenor. The first was couched in affectionate terms, acknowledging the hospitality and kindness shown to Columbus, and communicating the nature of his discoveries; requesting at the same time that the Portuguese navigators might be prohibited from visiting those newly discovered lands, in the same manner as the Spanish sovereigns had prohibited their subjects from interfering with the African possessions of Portugal.

In case, however, the ambassador found that King John had either sent, or was about to send, vessels to the new world, he was to withhold the amicable letter, and present the other, couched in stern and peremptory terms, forbidding any enterprize of the kind*.

A keen diplomatic game ensued between the two sovereigns, perplexing to any spectator not acquainted with the

* Herrera, Hist. Ind. Decad. 1, Lib. 2. Zurita, Anales de Aragon, Lib. 1, C. 25.

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secret of their play. Riesende, in his history of John II, informs us that the Portuguese monarch, by large presents, or rather bribes, held certain of the confidential members of the Castilian cabinet in his interest, who informed him of the most secret councils of their court. The roads were filled with couriers. Scarce was an intention expressed by Ferdinand to his ministers, but it was conveyed to his rival monarch. The result was that the Spanish sovereigns seemed as if under the influence of some enchantment. King John anticipated all their movements, and appeared to dive into their very thoughts. Their ambassadors were crossed on the road by Portuguese ambassadors, empowered to settle the very points on which they were to make remonstrances. Frequently when Ferdinand proposed a sudden and perplexing question to the envoys at his court, which apparently would require fresh instructions from their sovereigns, he would be astonished by a prompt and positive reply; most of the questions which were likely to occur, having, through secret information, been foreseen and provided for. As a surmise of treachery in the cabinet might naturally arise, King John, while he rewarded his agents in secret, endeavoured to divert suspicions from them upon others, making rich presents of jewels to the duke of Infantado and other Spanish grandees of incorruptible integrity*.

Such is the intriguing diplomatic craft, which too often passes for refined policy, and is extolled as the wisdom of the cabinet; but all corrupt and disingenuous measures are unworthy of an enlightened politician and a magnanimous prince. The grand principles of right and wrong operate in the same way between nations as between indi-

* Riesende, Vida del Rey Dom Joham II. Cap. 167. Faria y Sousa, Europa Portuguesa, T. 2, p. 3, C. 4.

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viduals; fair and open conduct, and inviolable faith, however they may appear adverse to present purposes, are the only kind of policy that will ensure ultimate and honourable success.

King John, having received intelligence, in the furtive manner that has been mentioned, of the double instructions furnished to Don Lope de Herrera, received him in such a manner as to prevent any resort to his peremptory letter. He had already dispatched an extra envoy to the Spanish court to keep it in good humour, and he now appointed doctor Pero Diaz and Don Ruy de Pena ambassadors to the Spanish sovereigns, to adjust all questions relative to the new discoveries, and promised that no vessel should be permitted to sail on a voyage of discovery within sixty days after their arrival at Barcelona. These ambassadors were instructed to propose, as a mode of effectually settling all claims, that a line should be drawn from the Canaries due west; all lands and seas north of it to appertain to the Castilian crown; all south to the crown of Portugal, excepting any islands already in possession of either power*.

Ferdinand had now the vantage ground; his object was to gain time for the preparation and departure of Columbus, by entangling King John in long diplomatic negociations†. In reply to his proposals, he dispatched Don Pedro de Ayala and Don Garcia Lopez de Caravajal on a solemn embassy to Portugal, in which there was great outward pomp and parade, and many professions of amity; but the whole purport of which was to propose to submit the territorial questions which had arisen between them to arbitration or to the court of Rome. This stately embassy moved with becom-

* Zurita, L. 1, Cap. 25. Herrera, Decad. 1, L. 2, Cap. 5.
† Vasconceles, Don Juan II. lib. 6.

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ing slowness, but a special envoy was sent in advance to apprize the king of Portugal of its approach, in order to keep him waiting for its communications.

King John understood the whole nature and object of the embassy, and felt that Ferdinand was foiling him. The ambassadors at length arrived, and delivered their credentials with great form and ceremony. As they retired from his presence, he looked after them contemptuously: "this embassy from our cousin," said he, "wants both head and feet." He alluded to the character both of the mission and the envoys. Don Garcia de Caravajal was vain and frivolous, and Don Pedro de Ayala was lame of one leg*.

In the height of his vexation, King John is even said to have held out some vague show of hostile intentions, taking occasion to let the ambassadors discover him reviewing his cavalry, and dropping ambiguous words in their hearing, which might be construed into something of menacing import†. The embassy returned to Castile, leaving him in a state of perplexity and irritation; but whatever might be his chagrin, his discretion prevented him from coming to an open rupture. He had some hopes of an interference on the part of the pope, to whom he had sent an embassy complaining of the pretended discoveries of the Spaniards as infringing the territories granted to Portugal by papal bull, and earnestly imploring redress. Here, as has been shown, his wary antagonist had been beforehand with him, and he was doomed again to be foiled. The only reply his ambassador received, was a reference to the line of partition from pole to pole, so sagely devised by his holiness‡. Such was

* Vasconceles, lib. 6. Barros, Asia, D. 1, L. 3, Cap. 2.

† Vasconceles, lib. 6.

‡ Herrera, Dec. 1, L. 2, Cap. 5.

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this royal game of diplomacy, where the parties were playing for a newly discovered world. John II was able and intelligent, and had crafty counsellors to advise him in all his moves; but wherever deep and subtle policy was required, Ferdinand was a master at the game,

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CHAPTER X.

FURTHER PREPARATIONS FOR THE SECOND VOYAGE—CHARACTER OF ALONZO DE OJEDA—DIFFERENCES OF COLUMBUS WITH SORIA AND FONSECA.

1493. DISTRUSTFUL of some attempt on the part of Portugal to interfere with their discoveries, the Spanish sovereigns, in the course of their negociations, wrote repeatedly to Columbus, urging him to hasten his departure. His zeal, however, needed no incitement: immediately on arriving at Seville, in the beginning of June, he had proceeded with all diligence to fit out the armament, making use of the powers given him, to put in requisition the ships and crews which were in the harbours of Andalusia. He was joined soon after by Fonseca and Soria, who had remained for a time at Barcelona, and with their united exertions a fleet of seventeen vessels, large and small, were soon in a state of preparation. The best pilots were chosen for the service, and the crews were mustered in presence of Soria the comptroller. A number of skilful husbandmen, miners, carpenters, and other mechanics, were engaged for the projected colony. Horses, both for military purposes and for stocking the country, cattle, and domestic animals of all kinds, were likewise provided. Grain, seeds of various plants, vines, sugar-canes, grafts, and saplings, were embarked, together with a great quantity of merchandise, consisting of trinkets, beads, hawks'

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bells, looking glasses, and other showy trifles, calculated for trafficking with the natives. Nor was there wanting an abundant supply of provisions of all sorts, munitions of war, and medicines and refreshments for the sick.

An extraordinary degree of excitement prevailed respecting this expedition. The most extravagant fancies were entertained with respect to the new world. The accounts given by the voyagers who had visited it were full of exaggeration; for in fact they had nothing but vague and confused notions concerning it, like the recollections of a dream; and it has been shown that Columbus himself had beheld every thing through the most delusive medium. The vivacity of his descriptions, and the sanguine anticipations of his ardent spirit, while they aroused the public to a wonderful degree of enthusiasm, prepared the way for bitter disappointment. The cupidity of the avaricious was inflamed with the idea of regions of unappropriated wealth, where the rivers rolled over golden sands, and the mountains teemed with gems and precious metals; where the groves produced spices and perfumes, and the shores of the ocean were sown with pearl. Others had conceived visions of a loftier kind. It was a romantic and stirring age, and the wars with the Moors being over, and hostilities with France suspended, the bold and restless spirits of the nation, impatient of the monotony of peaceful life, were eager for employment. To these the new world presented a vast field for wild enterprize and extraordinary adventure, so congenial to the Spanish character, in that period of its meridian fervour and brilliancy. Many hidalgos of high rank, officers of the royal household, and Andalusian cavaliers, schooled in arms, and inspired with a passion for hardy achievements by the romantic wars of Granada, pressed into the expedition, some in the royal service,

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others at their own cost. To them it was the commencement of a new series of crusades, surpassing in extent and splendour the chivalrous enterprizes to the holy land. They pictured to themselves vast and beautiful islands of the ocean, to be overrun and subdued; their internal wonders to be explored, and the banner of the cross to be planted on the walls of the cities they were supposed to embosom. From thence they were to make their way to the shores of India, or rather Asia, penetrate into Mangi and Cathay, convert, or what was the same thing, conquer the Grand Khan, and thus open a glorious career of arms among the splendid countries and semi-barbarous nations of the east. Thus no one had any definite idea of the object or nature of the service in which he was embarking, or the situation and character of the region to which he was bound. Indeed, during this fever of the imagination, had sober facts and cold realities been presented, they would have been rejected with disdain; for there is nothing of which the public is more impatient, than of being disturbed in the indulgence of any of its golden dreams.

Among the noted personages who engaged in the expedition was a young cavalier of the name of Don Alonzo de Ojeda, celebrated for his extraordinary personal endowments, and his daring spirit; and who distinguished himself by many perilous expeditions, and singular exploits, among the early discoverers. He was of a good family; cousin-german to the venerable father Alonzo de Ojeda, inquisitor of Spain; had been brought up under the patronage of the duke of Medina Cœli, and had served in the wars against the Moors. He was of small size, but vigorous make, well proportioned, dark complexioned, of handsome animated countenance, and incredible strength and agility: expert

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at all kinds of weapons, accomplished in all manly and warlike exercises, an admirable horseman, and a partisan soldier of the highest order: bold of heart, free of spirit, open of hand, fierce in fight, quick in brawl, but ready to forgive, and prone to forget an injury, he was for a long time the idol of the rash and roving youth who engaged in the early expeditions to the new world, and has been made the hero of many wonderful tales. On introducing him to historical notice, Las Casas gives an anecdote of one of his exploits, which would be unworthy of record, but that it exhibits the singular character of the man.

Queen Isabella being in the tower of the principal church of Seville, better known as the Giralda, Ojeda, to entertain her majesty, and to give proofs of his courage and agility, mounted on a great beam which projected in the air, twenty feet from the tower, at such an immense height from the ground that the people below looked like dwarfs, and it was enough to make one's flesh creep to look down. Along this beam he walked briskly, and with as much confidence as though he had been pacing his chamber. When arrived at the end, he stood on one leg, lifting the other in the air; then turning nimbly round he returned in the same way to the tower, unaffected by the giddy height, from whence the least false step would have precipitated him, and dashed him to pieces. He afterwards stood with one foot on the beam, and placing the other against the wall of the building, threw an orange to the summit of the tower, a proof, says Las Casas, of immense muscular strength. Such was Alonzo de Ojeda, who soon became conspicuous among the followers of Columbus, and was always foremost in every enterprize of an adventurous nature; who courted danger as if for the very love of danger, and seemed to fight

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more for the pleasure of fighting, than for the sake of distinction*.

The number of persons permitted to embark in the expedition had been limited to one thousand; but such was the urgent application of volunteers to be permitted to enlist without pay, that the number had been increased to twelve hundred; many more were refused, for want of room in the ships for their accommodation, but some contrived to get admitted by stealth, so that eventually about fifteen hundred set sail in the fleet. As Columbus, in his laudable zeal for the welfare of the enterprize, provided every thing that might be necessary in various possible emergencies, the expenses of the outfit exceeded what had been anticipated. This gave rise to occasional demurs on the part of the comptroller, Juan de Soria, who sometimes refused to sign the accounts of the admiral, and in the course of their transactions seems to have forgotten the deference due both to his character and station. For this he received repeated and severe reprimands from the sovereigns, who emphatically commanded that Columbus should be treated with the greatest respect, and every thing done to facilitate his plans and yield him satisfaction. From similar injunctions inserted in the royal letters to Fonseca, the archdeacon of Seville, it is probable that he also had occasionally indulged in the captious exercise of his official powers. He appears to have demurred to various requisitions of Columbus, particularly one for footmen and other domestics for his immediate service, to form his household and retinue as admiral and viceroy; a demand which was considered superfluous by the prelate, as all who embarked in

* Las Casas, Lib. 1. MS. Pizarro, Varones Illustres. Herrera, Decad. 1, Lib. 11, Cap. 5.

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the expedition were at his command. In reply, the sovereigns ordered that Columbus should be allowed ten *escuderos de a pie*, or footmen, and twenty persons in other domestic capacities, and reminded Fonseca that they had charged him, that both in the nature and mode of his transactions with the admiral, he should study to give him content; observing that, as the whole armament was intrusted to his command, it was but reasonable that his wishes should be consulted, and that no one should embarrass him with points and difficulties*.

These trivial differences are worthy of particular notice, from the effect they appear to have had on the mind of Fonseca; for from them we must date the first rise of that singular hostility which he ever after manifested towards Columbus, which every year increased in rancour, and which he gratified in the most invidious manner by secretly multiplying impediments and troubles in his path.

While the expedition was yet lingering in port, intelligence was received that a Portuguese caravel had set sail from Madeira, and steered for the west. Suspicions were immediately awakened that she was bound for the lately discovered lands. Columbus wrote an account of it to the sovereigns, and proposed to dispatch a part of his fleet in pursuit of her. His proposition was approved, but not carried into effect. On remonstrances being made to the court of Lisbon, King John declared that the vessel had sailed without his permission, and that he would send three caravels to bring her back. This only served to increase the jealousy of the Spanish monarchs, who considered the whole a deep

* Navarrete, Collec. T. 2. Documentos, No. 62, 63, 64, 65, 66.

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laid stratagem, and that it was intended the vessels should join their forces, and pursue their course together to the new world. Columbus was urged, therefore, to depart without an hour's delay; and instructed to steer wide of Cape St. Vincent, and entirely avoid the Portuguese coast and islands, for fear of molestation. If he met with any vessels in the seas he had explored, he was to seize them, and to inflict rigorous punishment on the crews. Fonseca was also ordered to be on the alert, and in case any expedition sailed from Portugal, to send double the force after it. These precautions, however, proved unnecessary. Whether such caravels actually did sail, and whether they were sent with sinister motives by Portugal, does not appear: nothing was either seen or heard of them by Columbus in the course of his voyage.

It may be as well, for the sake of distinctness, to anticipate in this place the regular course of history, and mention the manner in which this territorial question was finally settled between the rival sovereigns. It was impossible for King John to repress his disquiet at the indefinite enterprizes of the Spanish: he did not know how far they might extend, and whether they might not forestal him in all his anticipated discoveries in India. Finding, however, all attempts fruitless to gain by stratagem an advantage over his wary and skilful antagonist, and despairing of any further assistance from the court of Rome, he had recourse at last to fair and amicable negociations, and found, as is generally the case with those who turn aside into the inviting but crooked paths of craft, that had he kept to the line of frank and open policy, he would have saved himself a world of perplexity, and have arrived sooner at his object. He offered to leave to the Spanish sovereigns the free prosecution of their west-

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ern discovery, and to conform to the plan of partition by a meridian line; but he represented that this line had not been drawn far enough to the west; that while it left the wide ocean free to the range of Spanish enterprize, his navigators could not venture more than a hundred leagues west of his possessions, and had no scope nor sea-room in their southern voyages.

After much difficulty and discussion, this momentous dispute was adjusted by deputies from the two crowns, who met at Tordesillas, in Old Castile, in the following year, and on the 7th June, 1494, signed a treaty, by which the papal line of partition was moved to three hundred and seventy leagues west of the Cape de Verd islands. It was agreed that within ten months an equal number of caravels and mariners on the part of the two nations, should rendezvous at the island of the Grand Canary, provided with men learned in astronomy and navigation. They were to proceed thence to the Cape de Verd islands, and thence westward three hundred and seventy leagues, and determine the proposed line from pole to pole, dividing the ocean between the two nations*. Each of the two powers engaged solemnly to observe the bounds thus prescribed, and to prosecute no enterprize beyond its proper limits; though it was agreed that the Spanish navigators might traverse freely the eastern parts of the ocean in prosecuting their rightful voyages. Various circumstances impeded the proposed expedition to determine the line, but the treaty remained in force, and prevented all further dissensions.

Thus, says Vasconceles, this great question, the greatest ever agitated between the two crowns, for it was the parti-

* Zurita, Hist del Rei Fernand. Lib. 1, C. 29. Vasconceles, Lib. 6.

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tion of a new world, was amicably settled by the prudence and address of two of the most politic monarchs that ever swayed sceptre. It was arranged to the contentment of both parties, each holding himself entitled to the vast countries that might be discovered within his boundary, without any regard to the rights of the native inhabitants.

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LIFE AND VOYAGES

OF

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS.

BOOK VI.

CHAPTER I.

DEPARTURE OF COLUMBUS ON HIS SECOND VOYAGE—DISCOVERY OF THE CARIBBEE ISLANDS.

1493. THE departure of Columbus on his second voyage of discovery presented a brilliant contrast to his gloomy embarkation at Palos. On the 25th September, at the dawn of day, the bay of Cadiz was whitened by his fleet. There were three large ships of heavy burthen*, and fourteen caravels, loitering with flapping sails, and awaiting the signal to get under way. The harbour resounded with the well known note of the sailor, hoisting sail or weigh-

* Peter Martyr says they were carracks (a large species of merchant vessel, principally used in coasting trade) of one hundred tons burthen, and that two of the caravels were much larger than the rest, and more capable of bearing decks from the size of their masts. Decade 1, Lib. 1.

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ing anchor. A motley crowd were hurrying on board, and taking leave of their friends, in the confidence of a prosperous voyage and triumphant return. There was the high spirited cavalier, bound on romantic enterprize; the hardy navigator, ambitious of acquiring laurels in these unknown seas; the roving adventurer, who anticipates every thing from change of place and distance; the keen calculating speculator, eager to profit by the ignorance of savage tribes; and the pale missionary from the cloister, anxious to extend the dominion of the church, or devoutly zealous for the propagation of the faith. All were full of animation and lively hope. Instead of being regarded by the populace as devoted men, bound upon a dark and desperate enterprize, they were contemplated with envy, as favoured mortals, destined to golden regions and happy climes, where nothing but wealth, and wonders, and delights awaited them. Columbus moved among the throng, conspicuous for his height and for his commanding appearance. He was attended by his two sons, Diego and Fernando, the eldest but a stripling, who had come to witness his departure*, proud of the glory of their father. Wherever he passed, every eye followed him with admiration, and every tongue praised and blessed him. Before sunrise, the whole fleet was under way; the weather was serene and propitious; and as the populace watched their parting sails, brightening in the morning beams, they looked forward to their joyful return, laden with the treasures of the new world.

According to the instructions of the sovereigns, Columbus steered wide of the coasts of Portugal, and of its islands, standing to the southwest for the Canaries, where they arrived on the first of October. After touching at the Grand

* Hist. del Almirante, Cap. 44.

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Canary, they anchored on the 5th at Gomera, where they took in a supply of wood and water for the voyage. Here also they purchased calves, goats, and sheep, to stock the island of Hispaniola; and eight hogs, from which, according to Las Casas, the infinite number of swine was propagated, with which the Spanish settlements in the new world subsequently abounded. A number of domestic fowls were likewise purchased, which were the origin of the species in the new world; and the same might be said of the seeds of oranges, lemons, bergamots, melons, and various orchard fruits*, which were thus first introduced into the islands of the west, from the Hesperides, or Fortunate islands of the old world†.

On the 7th, when about to sail, Columbus gave to the commander of each vessel a sealed letter of instructions, in which was specified his route to the harbour of Nativity, the residence of the cacique Guacanagari. This was only to be opened in case of being separated by accident; as he wished to make a mystery, as long as possible, of the exact route to the newly discovered countries, lest adventurers of other nations, and particularly the Portuguese, should follow in his track, and interfere with his enterprizes‡.

After making sail from Gomera, they were becalmed for a few days among the Canaries, until on the 13th of October, a fair breeze sprang up from the east, which soon car-

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind. Lib. 1, Cap. 83. MS.

† Mons. de Humboldt is of opinion that there were wild oranges, small and bitter, as well as wild lemons in the new world prior to the discovery. Caldcleugh mentions also that the Brazilians consider the small bitter wild orange of native origin. Humboldt, Essai Politique sur l'isle de Cuba, T. 1, p. 68.

‡ Las Casas, ubi sup.

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ried them out of sight of the island of Ferro. Columbus held his course to the southwest, intending to keep considerably more to the southward than in his first voyage, in hopes of falling in with the islands of the Caribs, of which he had received such vague and wonderful accounts from the Indians*. Being in the region of the trade winds, the breeze continued fair and steady, with a quiet sea and pleasant weather, and by the 24th they had made four hundred and fifty leagues west of Gomera, without having seen any of those fields of sea-weeds, which they had encountered within a much less distance on their first voyage, when their appearance had been so important, and almost providential, inspiring continual hope, and enticing them forward in their dubious enterprize. Now they needed no such signals; they were full of confidence and lively anticipation, and on seeing a swallow circling about the ships, and being visited occasionally by sudden showers, they began to look out cheerily for land.

Towards the latter part of October, they were alarmed in the night by one of those sudden gusts of heavy rain, which are accompanied, in the tropics, with intense lightning, and tremendous peals of thunder. It lasted for four hours, and they considered themselves in much peril, until they beheld several of those lambent flames playing about the tops of the masts, and gliding along the rigging, which are occasionally seen about tempest-tost vessels, during a highly electrical state of the atmosphere. These singular phenomena, occurring in such awful times of gloom and peril, have always been objects of superstitious fancies among sailors. Fernando Columbus records their present appearance, and makes remarks on them strongly characteristic of

* Letter of Dr. Chanca.

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the age in which he lived. "On the same Saturday, in the night, was seen St. Elmo, with seven lighted tapers, at the topmast; there was much rain and great thunder; I mean to say that those lights were seen which mariners affirm to be the body of St. Elmo, on beholding which they chant many litanies and orisons, holding it for certain that, in the tempest in which he appears, no one is in danger. Be that as it may, I leave the matter to them; but if we may believe Pliny, similar lights have sometimes appeared to the Roman mariners during tempests at sea, which they said were Castor and Pollux, of which likewise Seneca makes mention*."

On the evening of Saturday, the 2d of November, Columbus was convinced from the colour of the sea, the nature of the waves, the variable winds, and frequent showers, that they must be near to land; he gave orders, therefore, to take in sail, and to maintain a vigilant watch throughout the night. He had judged with his usual sagacity. As the morning dawned, a lofty island was descried to the west, at the sight of which there were shouts of joy throughout the fleet: Columbus gave to the island the name of Dominica, from having discovered it on Sunday. As the ships moved gently onward, other islands rose to sight, one after another,

* Hist. del Almirante, Cap. 45.

A similar mention is made of this nautical superstition in the voyage of Magellan. "During these great storms they said that St. Elmo appeared at the topmasts with a lighted candle, and sometimes with two, upon which the people shed tears of joy, receiving great consolation, and saluted him according to the custom of mariners. He remained visible for a quarter of an hour, and then disappeared with a great flash of lightning, which blinded all the people." Herrera, Decad. 2, L. 4, C. 10.

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emerging as it were from the quiet ocean, covered with verdant forests, while great flights of parrots, and other tropical birds were winging their way from one to the other.

The crews were now assembled on the decks of the several vessels, to return thanks to God for their prosperous voyage, and their happy discovery of land, and the *Salve Regina*, and other anthems, were chanted by the mariners throughout the armada. Such was the pious manner in which Columbus celebrated all his discoveries, and which, in fact, was generally observed by the Spanish and Portuguese voyagers. It certainly presents a solemn and beautiful picture to the mind; this congregation of ships, uniting as it were in a Sabbath jubilee on the tranquil bosom of the deep, and sending up swelling anthems of praise to heaven, for the fair land that was rising to their view.

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CHAPTER II.

TRANSACTIONS AT THE ISLAND OF GUADALOUPE.

1493. THE islands among which Columbus had arrived, were a part of that beautiful cluster called by some the Antilles, which sweep almost in a semicircle, from the eastern end of Porto Rico to the coast of Paria, on the southern continent, forming a kind of barrier between the main ocean and the Caribbean sea.

During the course of the first day that he entered this archipelago, Columbus saw no less than six islands of different magnitude, clothed in that majestic vegetation peculiar to the tropics; and wherever the breeze passed over them, the whole air was sweetened by the fragrance of their forests. After seeking in vain for good anchorage at Dominica, he stood for another of the group, to which he gave the name of his ship, Marigalante. Here he landed, displayed the royal banner, and took possession of that and the adjacent islands in the name of his sovereigns. There was no vestige of a human being to be seen; the island appeared to be uninhabited; a rich and dense forest overspread it; some of the trees being in blossom, others laden with unknown fruits, others possessing spicy odours; among which was one with the leaf of the laurel, and the fragrance of the clove.

From hence they made sail for an island of larger size, with a remarkable mountain, one peak of which rose to a

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great height, with streams of water gushing from it, which proved afterwards to be the crater of a volcano. As they approached within three leagues, they beheld a great torrent tumbling over a precipice of such immense height that, to use the words of the narrator, "it seemed to be falling from the sky." As it broke into foam in its descent, many at first believed it to be merely a stratum of white rock*. To this island, which was called by the Indians Turuqueira†, the admiral gave the name of Guadaloupe; having promised the monks of Our Lady of Guadaloupe, in Estremadura, to call some newly discovered place after their convent.

Landing here on the 4th, they visited a village near the shore, the inhabitants of which fled at the sight of them, some leaving even their children behind, in their terror and confusion. These the Spaniards soothed with caresses, binding hawks' bells and other trinkets round their arms, to win the good will of their parents. This village, like most of those of the island, consisted of twenty or thirty houses, built round a kind of public place or square. The houses were constructed in similar style to those of Cuba and Hispaniola, of trunks of trees, interwoven with reeds and branches, and thatched with palm leaves. They were square, not circular like those of the other islands‡, and each had its portico or shelter from the sun. The entrance of one of these houses was decorated with images of serpents tolerably carved in wood. Their furniture was the same; hamacs of cotton net; utensils formed of calabashes, or earthenware, equal to the best of those of Hispaniola. There

* Letter of Dr. Chanca.

† Idem. Peter Martyr calls it Carucueria, or Queraquiera, Decad. 1, Lib. 2.

‡ Hist. del Almirante, Cap. 62.

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were large quantities of cotton, some crude, some in yarn, and some wrought into cloth of very tolerable texture; and many bows and arrows, the latter tipped with sharp bones. Provisions seemed to abound here. There were many domesticated geese, like those of Europe, and parrots as large as household fowls, with blue, green, white, and scarlet plumage, being the splendid species called Guacamayos. Here also the Spaniards first met with the delicious anana or pine-apple, the flavour and fragrance of which astonished and delighted them. While searching these houses, they were surprized to find a pan or other utensil of iron, not having ever met with that metal in the new world. Fernando Colon supposes, however, that it was formed of a certain kind of heavy stone found among those islands, which when burnt has the appearance of shining iron, and in their hasty survey may have been mistaken for such; though he admits that it might have been some utensil brought by the Indians from Hispaniola. Certain it is, that no native iron was ever found among the people of these islands.

Another object which was a matter of surprize and speculation, was the sternpost of a vessel, which they found in one of the houses. How had it reached these shores, which appeared never to have been visited by the ships of civilized man? was it the wreck of some vessel from the more enlightened countries of Asia, which they supposed to lie somewhere in this direction? or was it part of the caravel which Columbus had lost at the island of Hispaniola during his first voyage? or was it some fragment of a European ship which had drifted across the Atlantic? The latter was most probably the case. The constant current which sets over from the coast of Africa, produced by the steady prevalence of the trade winds, must occasionally bring the wrecks of the old world to the shores of the new; and long before the

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discovery of Columbus, the simple savages of the islands and the coasts, may have gazed with wonder at huge fragments of European barks, which have perished in the opposite regions of the ocean, and have gradually floated to their shores.

What most struck the attention of the Spaniards, and filled them with horror, was the sight of various human bones, vestiges, as they supposed, of the unnatural repasts of these savages. There were also sculls suspended in the houses, which apparently were used as vases, and other household utensils. These dismal objects convinced them that they were now at the abodes of the cannibals, or Caribs; those roving and ferocious warriors, whose predatory expeditions and ruthless character rendered them the terror of these seas.

The boat having returned on board, Columbus proceeded for upwards of two leagues, until late in the evening, when he anchored in a convenient port. The island on this side extended for the distance of five and twenty leagues, diversified with lofty mountains and broad plains. Along the coast were seen small villages and hamlets, the inhabitants of which fled in affright as they beheld the squadron sweeping along their shores. At day-break Columbus permitted several of the captains to land, with a number of their men, to endeavour to communicate with the inhabitants. These divided into parties, and returned in the course of the day, having taken a boy and several women, some of whom were natives of the island, and others captives. From the latter, Columbus was confirmed in his idea that this was one of the islands of the Caribs. He learnt that the inhabitants were in league with two neighbouring islands, but that they made war upon all others in their vicinity. They even went on predatory enterprises, in their canoes made from the hollowed trunks of trees, to the distance of one hundred and fifty

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leagues. Their arms were bows and arrows, pointed with the bones of fishes, or shells of tortoises, and poisoned with the juice of a certain herb. They made descents upon the islands, ravaged the villages, carried off the youngest and handsomest of the women, whom they retained as servants or companions, and made prisoners of the men, to be killed and eaten.

After hearing such formidable accounts of the natives of this island, Columbus was extremely uneasy at finding in the evening that a captain of one of the caravels, Diego Marque, was missing, together with eight men. He had landed with his party early in the morning, without leave, and straying into the woods, had not since been seen or heard of. On the following day the wanderers had not returned, and the anxiety of the admiral increased, fearing that they might have fallen into some ambush of the savages; for several of them were such experienced mariners, that it was thought, in case of being lost, they could readily have found their way back by the stars. Parties were sent in various directions in quest of them, each with a trumpeter to sound calls and signals. Guns were fired from the ships, and arquebusses on shore, but all to no purpose, and the parties returned in the evening, wearied with a fruitless search. They had visited several hamlets, in which they met with what they considered proofs of the cannibal propensities of the natives; and which were by no means calculated to allay their apprehensions for the safety of their companions. Human limbs were suspended to the beams of the houses, as if curing for provisions; they found the head of a young man recently killed, which was yet bleeding, and some parts of his body boiling with the flesh of geese and parrots, and others roasting before the fire*.

* P. Martyr, Letter 147, to Pomponio Leto. Idem, Dec. 1, Lib. 2.

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Several of the natives, in the course of the day, had been seen occasionally on the shore, gazing with wonder at the ships, but when the boats approached the land, they fled to the woods or the mountains. Several women came off to the Spaniards for refuge, being captives who had been brought from other islands. Columbus ordered that they should be decorated with hawks' bells and strings of beads and bugles, and sent on shore, in hopes, by these means, to entice some of the men of the island to visit him. They soon returned to the boats stripped of their ornaments by the ferocious islanders, and imploring to be taken on board of the ships. The admiral learnt from them that most of the men of the island were absent, the king having sailed some time before with ten canoes and three hundred warriors on a predatory cruise in quest of prisoners and booty. When the men went forth on these expeditions the women remained to defend their shores from invasion. They were expert archers, partaking of the warrior spirit of their husbands, and almost equalling them in force and intrepidity*.

Beside the female fugitives who had taken refuge on board of the ships there were several boys, who had been captives among the natives, and reserved, it is said, for a cruel destiny. The Spaniards were informed that it was the custom of the Caribs to rear these youthful prisoners to man's estate, and then to fatten them for their feasts, and that they even deprived them of their virility, to render them more tender and palatable food†. There is something so revolting to human nature in the idea of cannibalism, that we would fain attribute these accounts to the mistakes, the misinterpreta-

* Peter Martyr, Decad. 3, Lib. 9.

† Letter of Dr. Chanca. Peter Martyr, Let. 147. Hist. del Almirante, Cap. 46.

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tions, and the fables of travellers, but they are too positively affirmed by respectable writers, and are too curious in themselves to be passed over in silence.

Columbus was now at a loss what course to adopt. He was anxious to arrive at Hispaniola and ascertain the fate of the followers whom he had left there; and was impatient of any delay. To sail without these men, however, provided they were yet alive, was to abandon them to a cruel death at the hands of cannibals. To leave a vessel and crew behind to await their return, was to run the risk of losing them by a thousand accidents on these wild coasts and in these unexplored seas. In this emergency Alonzo de Ojeda, the same daring young cavalier whose exploit on the tower of the cathedral of Seville has been mentioned, volunteered to penetrate with forty men into the interior of the island, and to search all the forests for the wanderers. His offer was accepted, and the admiral commanded that during his absence the ships should take in a supply of wood and water; and gave permission for part of the crews to land, to wash their clothes, and recreate themselves on shore.

Alonzo de Ojeda with his followers beat up all the forests in the neighbourhood, and marched far into the interior; discharging arquebusses, sounding trumpets in the hollow valleys, and from the cliffs of mountains and precipices; but it was all in vain; no voice nor sound but their own echoes was heard in reply. Their search was rendered excessively toilsome by the closeness of the forests, which flourished with the vigorous and wild luxuriance of the tropics. Ojeda saw every thing with the romantic eye of a young adventurer, and brought back the most exaggerated accounts of the natural productions of the country. The forests were filled with the odour of aromatic trees and shrubs, in which he fancied he perceived the fragrance of many precious gums and spices.

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He saw many tropical birds of unknown species; also falcons, royal herons, kites, wood-pigeons, turtle-doves, and crows. He fancied also that he met with partridges, which, in reality, were only to be found in the island of Cuba; and that he heard the song of the nightingale, which is unknown in the new world. The island, however, abounded with fruits; for, according to Peter Martyr, the cannibals being a wild and wandering people, and overrunning all the neighbouring countries in their expeditions, were accustomed to bring home the seeds and roots of all kinds of strange and profitable plants. As a proof of its luxuriance, also, he observes, that honey was found in hollow trees and in the clefts of the rocks. So abundantly was it watered, that Ojeda declared he had waded through twenty-six rivers within the distance of six leagues; though it is probable many of them were the windings and doublings of the same stream.

Columbus now gave the stragglers up for lost. Several days had elapsed since their disappearance, during which time, if alive, it seemed impossible that they should not have either been found, or have made their way back to the ships. He was just upon the point of sailing, when to the universal joy of the fleet, a signal was made by them from the shore. When they came on board, their haggard and exhausted looks bespoke what they had suffered. Having unaccountably diverged on their first entering the forests, they had unknowingly penetrated deeper and deeper into the island, until they had become completely bewildered. For several days they had been perplexed in the mazes of a trackless forest, so dense as almost to exclude the light of day. They had clambered rocks, waded rivers, and struggled through briars and thickets. Some who were experienced seamen climbed the trees, in hopes of getting a sight of the stars, by which they might govern their course; but the wide-spread

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ing branches, and thick foliage, shut out all view of the heavens*. They were harassed with the most dismal apprehensions, fearing that the admiral, thinking them dead, might set sail, and leave them behind in this wilderness, cut off for ever from their homes, and the abodes of civilized man. At length, when almost reduced to despair, they had arrived at the seashore, and following its margin for some time, beheld, to their great transport, the fleet riding quietly at anchor. They brought with them several Indian women and boys; but in all their wanderings, they had not met with any men; the greater part of the warriors, as has been said, being fortunately absent on an expedition. Notwithstanding the hardships they had endured, and his joy at their return, Columbus thought it important, in a service of so critical a nature, to punish every breach of discipline. The captain was therefore put under arrest, and a part of the rations of the men were stopped, for having thus strayed away without permission†.

* Dr. Chanca's Letter.

† Idem. Hist. del Almirante, Cap. 46.

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CHAPTER III.

CRUISE AMONG THE CARIBBEE ISLANDS.

1493. WEIGHING anchor on the 10th of November, Columbus steered along the coast of Guadaloupe, towards the northwest, in which direction, according to his own calculations, and the information of the Indians, lay Hispaniola. The women whom he had recently taken on board, had given him intelligence of other islands to the south, and had assured him that the main land extended in that quarter, information which he afterwards found to be true, but at present his impatience to arrive at the harbour of Nativity, prevented his extending his discoveries.

Continuing along this beautiful archipelago, he gave names to its islands as they successively rose to view. Montserrat, Santa Maria la Redonda, Santa Maria la Antigua, and San Martin; various other islands appeared to the north, and extending northwest and southeast, all very high, with stately and magnificent forests, but the admiral forebore to visit them. The weather proving boisterous, they anchored on the 14th November, at an island called Ayay by the Indians, but to which the admiral gave the name of Santa Cruz. Here the boat was sent on shore, with five and twenty men, to get water and procure information concerning their route. They found a village deserted by the men, but they secured a few women and boys, most of whom were captives brought hither from other islands; for this was like-

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wise an abode of the Caribs. They had soon an instance of the courage and ferocity of this singular race. While the boat was on shore, a canoe with a few Indians, two of whom were females, came coasting from a distant part of the island, and turning a point of land arrived suddenly in full view of the ships. Astonished at what to them must have been so awful and supernatural an apparition, they remained for a long time gazing in mute amazement. So completely were they entranced in contemplation, that the boat, returning from the shore, had stole close upon them before they perceived it. Seizing their paddles, they now attempted to escape; but though their light canoe skimmed the surface of the waves, the steady sweep of the oar gained upon them, and the boat, being between them and the land, cut off their retreat. Seeing flight was vain, they caught up their bows and arrows, and turned fiercely upon their pursuers. The women fought as well as the men. One of them appeared to be treated with obedience and reverence, as if she were their queen. She was accompanied by her son, "a young man," says Peter Martyr, "strongly made, of a terrible and frowning brow, and a lion's face*." They plied their bows with amazing vigour and rapidity. Although the Spaniards were covered with their bucklers, two of them were quickly wounded; and an arrow was sent with such force by one of the heroines, as to pass through and through a buckler.

To avoid this galling fire, which was rendered more formidable from an apprehension that the arrows might be poisoned, the Spaniards ran their boat violently upon the canoe, and overturned it. The fierce savages, however, continued to fight while in the water; gathering themselves oc-

* P. Martyr, Decad. 1, Lib. 2.

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casionally upon sunken rocks, and discharging their arrows as dexterously as though they had been upon firm land. It was with the utmost difficulty they could be overcome and taken. One of them was transfixed with a lance, so that he died after being brought to the ships, and the queen's son was wounded. When on board the Spaniards could not but admire their untamed spirit and fierce demeanour. Their hair was long and coarse, their eyes encircled with paint so as to give them a hideous expression; they had bands of cotton bound firmly above and below the muscular parts of the arms and legs, so as to cause them to swell to a disproportioned size, which was regarded by them as a great beauty, a custom which prevailed among various tribes of the new world. Though captives, in chains, and in the power of their enemies, they still retained a frowning brow, and an air of defiance. Peter Martyr, who often went to see them when in Spain, declares, from his own experience, and that of others who accompanied him, that it was impossible to look at them without a certain inward sensation of horror; nature having endowed them with so menacing and terrible an aspect. This sensation was doubtless caused in a great measure from the idea of their being cannibals. In this skirmish, according to the same writer, the Indians used poisoned arrows; and one of the Spaniards died within a few days, of a wound he had received from a female warrior*.

Pursuing his voyage, Columbus soon came in sight of a great cluster of islands of various shapes and appearances; some verdant and covered with forests, but the greater part naked and sterile, rising into wild cragged mountains: many

* P. Martyr Decad. 1, L. 2. Hist. del Almirante, C. 47. Las Casas, Hist. Ind. C. 85, MS. Let. of Dr. Chanca.

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of the rocks of which were of a bright azure colour, and others of a glistering white; these Columbus, with his usual vivacity of imagination, supposed to contain mines of rich metals and precious stones. The islands lying close together, with the sea beating and tossing roughly in the narrow channels which divided them, rendered it dangerous to enter among them with the large ships. Keeping off, therefore, in the broad sea, Columbus sent in a small caravel with lateen sails, to reconnoitre, which returned with the report that there were upwards of fifty islands, but apparently uninhabited. To the largest of this group Columbus gave the name of Santa Ursula, and he called the others the Eleven Thousand Virgins*.

Deferring the examination of them to some future time, he continued his course, until he arrived one evening in sight of a great island covered with beautiful forests, and indented with fine havens. It was called by the natives Boriquen; but he gave it the name of St. Juan Bautista, and it is the same since known by the name of Porto Rico. This was the native island of most of the captives, who had fled to the ships for refuge from the Caribs. According to their accounts, it was fertile and populous, and under the dominion of a single cacique. Its inhabitants were not given to rove, and possessed but few canoes. They were subject to frequent invasions from the Caribs, who were their implacable enemies. They had become warriors, therefore, in their own defence, using the bow and arrow, and the war club; and in their contests with their cannibal foes, they retorted upon them their own atrocities, devouring their prisoners in sheer revenge.

* P. Martyr, Decad. 1, L. 2. Letter of Dr. Chanca.

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After running for a whole day along the beautiful coast of this island, they anchored in a bay at the west end, which abounded with fish. On landing, they found an Indian village, situated as usual, round a common square, like a market-place, with one large and well built house. From hence a spacious road led to the sea-side, having fences on each side of interwoven reeds, inclosing fruitful gardens. At the end of the road was a kind of terrace, or look-out, neatly constructed with reeds, and overhanging the water. The whole place had an air of neatness and ingenuity, superior to the ordinary residences of the natives, and appeared to be the abode of some important chieftain. All, however, was silent and deserted. Not a human being was to be seen during the time that they remained at the place. The natives had fled and concealed themselves, at the sight of the squadron. After remaining here for two days, he again made sail, and stood for the island of Hispaniola. Thus ended his cruise among the Caribbee islands; the account of whose fierce and savage people was received with eager curiosity by the learned of Europe, and considered as settling one dark and doubtful question, to the disadvantage of human nature. Peter Martyr, in his letter to Pomponius Lœto, announces the fact with fearful solemnity. "The stories of the Listrigonians and of Poliphemus, who fed on human flesh, are no longer doubtful! Attend, but beware, lest thy hair bristle with horror!"

That many of the pictures given us of this extraordinary race of people have been coloured by the fears of the Indians, and the prejudices of the Spaniards, is highly probable. They were the constant terror of the former, and the brave and obstinate opponents of the latter. The evidences adduced of their cannibal propensities must be considered with large allowances for the careless and inaccurate observations

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of seafaring men, and the belief of the fact which existed in the minds of the Spaniards. It was a custom among the natives of many of the islands, and of other parts of the new world, to preserve the remains of their deceased relatives and friends. Sometimes the entire body, sometimes only the head, or some of the limbs, dried at the fire; sometimes the mere bones. These, when found in the dwellings of the natives of Hispaniola, against whom no prejudice of the kind existed, were correctly regarded as reliques of the deceased, preserved through affection or reverence; but any remains of the kind found among the Caribs were looked upon with horror as proofs of cannibalism.

The warlike and unyielding character of these people, so different from that of the pusillanimous nations around them, and the wide scope of their enterprizes and wanderings, like those of the nomade tribes of the old world, entitle them to distinguished attention. They were trained to war from their infancy. As soon as they could walk, their Amazonian mothers put in their hands the bow and arrow, and prepared them to take an early part in the hardy enterprizes of their fathers. Their distant roamings by sea had made them observant and intelligent. The natives of the other islands only knew how to divide time by day and night, by the sun and moon, whereas these had acquired some knowledge of the stars, by which to calculate the times and seasons*.

The traditional accounts of their origin, though of course extremely vague, are yet capable of being verified to a great degree by geographical facts, and open one of the rich veins of curious inquiry and speculation which abound in the new world. They are said to have migrated from the remote

* Hist. del Almirante, Cap. 62.

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valleys embosomed in the Appalachian mountains. The earliest notices we have of them represent them with their weapons in their hands; continually engaged in wars; winning their way and shifting their abode, until in the course of time they found themselves on the extreme end of Florida. Here, abandoning the northern continent, they passed over to the Lucayos, and from thence gradually, in the process of years, from island to island of that vast and verdant chain, which links as it were the end of Florida to the coast of Paria, on the southern continent. The archipelago, extending from Porto Rico to Tobago, was their strong hold, and the island of Guadaloupe in a manner their citadel. Hence they made their expeditions, and spread the terror of their name through all the surrounding countries. Swarms of them landed upon the southern continent, and overran some parts of Terra Firma. Traces of them have been discovered far in the interior of the country through which flows the Oroonoko. The Dutch found colonies of them on the banks of the Ikouteka, which empties into the Surinam, along the Esquibi, the Maroni, and other rivers of Guayana, and in the country watered by the windings of the Cayenne; and it would appear, that they have even pushed their wanderings to the shores of the southern ocean; where, among the aborigines of Brazil, were some who called themselves Caribs, distinguished from the surrounding Indians by their superior hardihood, subtilty, and enterprize*.

To trace the footsteps of this roving tribe throughout its wide migrations from the Appalachian mountains of the northern continent, along the clusters of islands which stud the gulf of Mexico and the Caribbean sea to the shores of

* Rochefort, Hist. Nat. des Iles Antilles. Roterdam, 1665.

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Paria, and so across the vast regions of Guayana and Amazonia to the remote coast of Brazil, would be one of the most curious researches in aboriginal history, and might throw much light upon the mysterious question of the population of the new world.

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CHAPTER IV.

ARRIVAL AT THE HARBOUR OF LA NAVIDAD—DISASTER OF THE FORTRESS.

1493. On the 22d of November the fleet arrived off the end of a great island, and soon ascertained it to be the eastern extremity of Hayti, or, as the admiral had named it, Hispaniola. The greatest animation prevailed throughout the armada, at the thoughts of soon arriving at the end of their voyage. Columbus anticipated the joy of the handful of bold spirits which he had left in the wilderness, and looked for golden information from them, relative to the island and its surrounding seas, if not for heaps of amassed treasure. Those of his followers who had been here in the preceding voyage, remembered the pleasant days they had passed among the blooming groves of Hayti; and the rest looked forward with eagerness to scenes and manners which had been painted to them with all the captivating illusions of the golden age.

As the fleet swept gently with easy sail along the green shore, a boat was sent to land to bury a Biscayan sailor, who had died of the wound of an arrow, which he had received in the skirmish with the Caribs. Two light caravels hovered near the shore, to guard the boat's crew while the funeral ceremony was performed on the beach under the trees. Several of the natives came off to the ship, with a message to the admi-

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ral from the cacique of the neighbourhood, inviting him to land, and promising great quantities of gold. Anxious, however, to arrive at La Navidad, Columbus declined the invitation, dismissed them with presents, and continued on his course. After sailing for a considerable distance, he came to the gulf of Las Flechas, or, as it is now called, the gulf of Samana, the same place where in his preceding voyage had occurred the skirmish with the natives. Here he set on shore one of the young Indians of the place, who had accompanied him to Spain, and had been converted to Christianity. He dismissed him, finely apparelled, and loaded with trinkets, anticipating favourable effects from his representing to his countrymen all the wonders that he had seen, and the kind treatment he had experienced. The young Indian made many promises of friendly exertions, but he either forgot them all, on regaining his wild liberty and his native mountains, or he fell a victim to the envy caused by his wealth and finery. Nothing was seen or heard of him more*. Only one Indian of those who had been to Spain now remained in the fleet; a young Lucayan native of the island of Guanahani, who had been baptised at Barcelona, and had been named after the admiral's brother, Diego Colon, (or Columbus.) He continued always faithful and devoted to the Spaniards.

On the 25th Columbus anchored in the harbour of Monte Christi, anxious to fix upon a place suitable for a settlement, in the neighbourhood of the stream to which, in his first voyage, he had given the name of the Rio del Oro, or the Golden River. As several of the mariners were ranging the coast, they found, on the green and moist banks of a rivulet, the bodies of a man and boy; the former with a cord of Spanish grass about his neck, and his arms extended, and tied by the

* Herrera, Hist. Ind. Decad 1, lib. 2, C. 9.

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wrists to a stake in the form of a cross. The bodies were in such a state of decay, that it was impossible to ascertain whether they were Indian or European. Sinister doubts, however, were entertained, which were confirmed on the following day; for, on revisiting the shore, they found, at some distance from the former, two other bodies, one of which having a beard, was evidently the corpse of a white man.

The pleasant anticipations of Columbus on his approach to La Navidad, were now overcast with gloomy forebodings. The experience he had recently had of the ferocity of some of the inhabitants of these islands, made him doubtful of the amity of others, and he began to fear that some misfortune might have befallen Arana and his garrison. The frank and fearless manner, however, in which a number of the natives came off to the ships, and their unembarrassed demeanour, in some measure allayed his suspicions. Had any violence been done to the white men, they would not have ventured thus confidently among their companions.

On the 27th he arrived in the evening opposite the harbour of La Navidad, and cast anchor about a league from the land, not daring to enter in the dark, on account of the dangerous reefs. It was too late in the night to distinguish objects. Impatient to satisfy his doubts, therefore, he ordered two cannon to be fired. The report echoed along the shore, but there was no reply from the fort. Every eye was now directed to catch the gleam of some signal light: every ear listened to hear some friendly shout; but there was neither light, nor shout, nor any other sign of life: all was darkness and death-like silence*.

Several hours passed away in the most dismal suspense. A thousand disastrous pictures presented themselves of the

* Letter of Dr. Chanca. Navarrete, Collec. de Viage, T. 1.

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fate of their companions, and every one longed for the morning light to put an end to his uncertainty. About midnight a canoe was observed approaching the fleet; when within a certain distance it paused, and the Indians who were in it hailing one of the vessels, asked for the admiral. When directed to his ship, they drew near to it, but would not venture on board until they saw Columbus personally. He showed himself at the side of his vessel, and a light being held up, his countenance and commanding person were not to be mistaken. They now entered the ship without hesitation. One of them was a cousin of the cacique Guacanagari, and brought a present from him of two masks ornamented with gold. Columbus immediately inquired about the Spaniards who had remained on the island. The information which he gave was somewhat confused, or perhaps was imperfectly understood, as the only Indian interpreter on board was the young Lucayan, Diego Colon, whose native language was different from that of Hayti. He told Columbus that several of the Spaniards had died of sickness; others had fallen in a quarrel which had occurred among themselves, and others had removed to a different part of the island, where they had taken to themselves several Indian wives. That Guacanagari had been assailed by Caonabo, the fierce cacique of the golden mountains of Cibao, who had wounded him in battle, and had burnt his village; and that he remained ill of his wound in a neighbouring hamlet, which had prevented his hastening in person to welcome the admiral on his return*.

Melancholy as were these tidings, they relieved Columbus from a dark and dismal surmise. Whatever disasters had

* Dr. Chanca's letter. Hist. del Almirante, C. 48. Herrera Hist. Ind. Decad 1, Lib. 2, Cap. 9.

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overwhelmed his garrison, it had not fallen a sacrifice to the perfidy of the natives. His good opinion of the gentleness and kindness of these people had not been misplaced; nor had their cacique forfeited the admiration inspired by his benevolent hospitality. Thus the most corroding care was plucked out of his mind; for to a generous spirit there is nothing so disheartening as to discover treachery where it has reposed its confidence and friendship. It would seem also that some of the garrison were yet alive; though scattered about the island, they would doubtless soon hear of the arrival of the ships, and would hasten to rejoin them, well qualified to give information of the interior.

Satisfied of the friendly disposition of the natives, the cheerfulness of the people was in a great measure restored. The Indians who had come on board were well entertained, and departed in the night, gratified with various presents, promising to return in the morning with the cacique Guacanagari. The crews now awaited the dawn of day with reassured spirits, when it was expected that the cordial intercourse and pleasant scenes of the first voyage would be renewed.

The morning dawned and passed away, and the day advanced and began to decline, without the promised visit from the cacique. Some apprehensions were now entertained that the Indians who had visited them the preceding night might be drowned, as they had partaken freely of wine, and their small canoe was easy to be overturned. There was a silence, however, and an air of desertion, about the whole neighbourhood, extremely suspicious. On their preceding voyage, the harbour had been a scene of continual animation: canoes gliding over the clear waters, Indians in groups on the shores, or under the trees, or swimming off to the caravel. Now not a canoe was to be seen, not an Indian hailed them

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from the land; nor was there any smoke rising from among the groves, to give a sign of habitation.

After waiting for a long time in vain, Columbus sent a boat to the shore to reconnoitre. On landing, the crew hastened to the place where the fortress had been erected. They found it a burnt ruin; the pallisadoes beaten down, and the whole presenting the appearance of having been sacked and destroyed. Here and there were broken chests, spoiled provisions, and the ragged remains of European garments; which gave dismal indications of the fate of their companions. Not an Indian approached them. They caught sight of two or three lurking at a distance among the trees, and apparently watching them; but they vanished into the woods on finding themselves observed. Meeting no one from whom they could obtain an explanation of the melancholy scene before them, they returned with dejected hearts to the ships, and related to the admiral what they had seen.

Columbus was greatly troubled in mind at this intelligence, and the fleet having now anchored in the harbour, he went himself to shore on the following morning. Repairing to the ruins of the fortress, he found every thing as had been described, and searched in vain among the ruins for the remains of dead bodies. No traces of the garrison were to be seen, but the broken utensils and torn vestments, scattered here and there among the grass. There were many surmises and conjectures. If the fortress had been sacked, some of the garrison might yet survive, and might either have fled from the neighbourhood, or been carried into captivity. Cannon and arquebusses were discharged, in hopes that if any of the survivers were hid among rocks or thickets of the vicinity, they might hear them and come forth; but no one made his appearance. A mournful and lifeless silence reigned over the place. The suspicion of treachery on the

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part of Guacanagari was again revived, but Columbus was unwilling to indulge it. On looking further, the village of that cacique was found a mere heap of burnt ruins: which showed that he had been involved in the same disaster with the garrison.

Columbus had left orders with Arana and the other officers, to bury all the treasure they might procure, or, in case of sudden danger, to throw it into the well of the fortress. He ordered excavations to be made, therefore, among the ruins, and the well to be cleared out. While this search was making, he proceeded with the boats to explore the neighbourhood; partly in hopes of gaining intelligence of any scattered survivers of the garrison, and partly to look out for a better situation for a fortress. After proceeding about a league, he came to a hamlet, the inhabitants of which had fled, taking with them whatever they could carry, and hiding the rest in the grass. In the houses were found European articles, which evidently had not been procured by barter; such as stockings, pieces of cloth, an anchor of the caravel which had been wrecked, and a beautiful Moorish robe, which remained folded in the form in which it had been brought from Spain*.

Having passed some time in contemplating these scattered documents of a disastrous story, Columbus returned to the ruins of the fortress. The excavations and the search in the well had proved fruitless; no treasure was to be found. Not far from the fort, however, they had discovered the bodies of eleven men, buried in different places, and which were known, by their clothing, to be Europeans. They had evidently been for some time in the ground, the grass having grown upon their graves.

* Letter of Dr. Chanca. Cura de los Palacios, C. 120.

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In the course of the day a number of the Indians began to make their appearance, hovering timidly at a distance, and showing great distrust. Their apprehensions were gradually conquered by amicable signs and trifling presents, until at length they became perfectly communicative. Some of them could speak a few words of Spanish, and knew the names of all the men who had remained with Arana; by this means, and by the aid of the interpreter, the story of the garrison was in some measure ascertained.

It is curious to note this first foot print of civilization in the new world. Those whom Columbus had left behind, says Oviedo, with the exception of the commander, Don Diego de Arana, and one or two others, were but little calculated to follow the precepts of so prudent a person, or to discharge the critical duties enjoined upon them. They were pincipally men of the lowest order, or mariners who knew not how to conduct themselves with restraint and sobriety on shore*. No sooner had the departing sail of the admiral faded from their sight, than all his counsels and commands died away from their minds. Though a mere handful of men, surrounded by savage tribes, and dependent upon their own prudence and good conduct, and upon the good will of the natives, for very existence, yet they soon began to indulge in the most wanton wrongs and abuses. Some were incited by rapacious avarice, others by gross sensuality. They sought to amass private hoards of gold, nor were they content with their success among the Indian women, though at least two or three wives had been granted to each of them by Guacanagari. They possessed themselves, by all kinds of wrongful means, of the ornaments and other property of the natives, and seduced from them their wives and daugh-

* Oviedo, Hist. Ind. L. 2, C. 12.

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ters. Fierce brawls incessantly occurred among themselves about their ill-gotten spoils, or the favours of the Indian beauties; and the simple natives beheld with astonishment the beings whom they had worshipped as descended from the skies, abandoned to the grossest of earthly passions, and raging against each other with worse than brutal ferocity.

Still these dissensions were not so dangerous as long as they observed one of the grand injunctions of Columbus, and kept together in the fortress, maintaining military vigilance; but all precaution of the kind was soon forgotten. In vain did Don Diego de Arana interpose his authority; in vain did every inducement present itself which could bind man and man together in a foreign land. All order, all subordination, all unanimity, was at an end. Many of them abandoned the fortress, and lived carelessly and at random about the neighbourhood; every one was for himself, or associated with some little knot of confederates to injure and despoil the rest. Thus factions broke out among them, until ambition arose to complete the destruction of this mimic empire. The two persons, Pedro Gutierrez and Rodrigo de Escobedo, whom Columbus had left as lieutenants to the commander, to succeed to him in case of accident, now took advantage of these disorders, and aspired to an equal share in the authority, if not to the supreme control*. Violent affrays succeeded, in which a Spaniard by the name of Jacomo was killed. Having failed in their object, Gutierrez and Escobedo withdrew from the fortress, with nine of their adherents, and a number of their women; and still bent on command, now turned their thoughts on distant enterprize. Having heard marvellous accounts of the mines of

* Oviedo, Hist. Ind. L. 2, C. 12.

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Cibao, and the golden sands of its mountain rivers, they set off for that district, flushed with the thoughts of amassing immense treasure. Thus they disregarded another strong injunction of Columbus, which was to keep within the friendly territories of Guacanagari. The region to which they repaired was in the interior of the island, within the province of Maguana, ruled by the famous Caonabo, called by the Spaniards the lord of the golden house. This renowned chieftain was a Carib by birth, possessing the fierceness and the enterprize of his nation. He had come an adventurer to the island, and had acquired such ascendancy over these simple and unwarlike people by his courage and address, that he had made himself the most potent of their caciques. His warlike exploits were renowned throughout the island, and the inhabitants universally stood in awe of him for his Carib origin.

Caonabo had for some time maintained paramount importance in the island; the hero of this savage world, when the ships of the white men suddenly appeared upon its shores. The wonderful accounts of their power and prowess had reached him among his mountains, and he had the shrewdness to perceive that his own consequence must decline before such formidable intruders. The departure of Columbus had revived his hopes that their intrusion would be but temporary. The discords and excesses of those who remained, while they moved his detestation, inspired him with increasing confidence. No sooner, therefore, did Gutierrez and Escobedo, with their companions, take refuge in his dominions, than he considered himself secure of a triumph over these detested strangers. He seized upon the fugitives, and put them instantly to death. He then assembled his subjects, privately; and, concerting his plans with the cacique of Marien, whose territories adjoined those of

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Guacanagari on the west, he determined to make a sudden attack upon the fortress. Emerging from among the mountains, and traversing great tracts of forest with profound secrecy, he arrived with his army in the vicinity of the village, without being discovered. Confiding in the gentle and pacific nature of the Indians, the Spaniards had neglected all military precautions, and lived in the most careless security. But ten men remained in the fortress with Arana, and these do not appear to have maintained any guard. The rest were quartered in houses in the neighbourhood. In the dead of the night, when all were wrapt in unsuspecting repose, Caonabo and his warriors burst upon the place, with frightful yells; got possession of the fortress, before the inmates could put themselves upon their defence, and surrounded and set fire to the houses in which the rest of the white men were sleeping. The Spaniards were completely taken by surprise. Eight of them fled to the seaside, pursued by the savages, and rushing into the waves for safety, were drowned; the rest were massacred. Guacanagari and his subjects fought faithfully in defence of their guests; but not being of a warlike character, they were easily routed; Guacanagari was wounded in the combat by the hand of Caonabo, and his village was burnt to the ground*.

Such was the history of the first European establishment in the new world. It presents, in a diminutive compass, an epitome of the gross vices which degrade civilization, and the grand political errors which sometimes subvert the mightiest empires. All law and order relaxed by corruption

* Herrera, Hist. Ind. Decad. 1, Lib. 2, C. 9. Letter of Dr. Chanca. Peter Martyr, Decad. 1, Lib. 2. Hist. del Almirante, C. 49. Cura de los Palacios, C. 120. MS. Muñoz, Hist. N. Mundo, L. 4.

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and licentiousness, public good was sacrificed to private interest and passion, the community was convulsed by divers factions and dissensions, until the whole was shaken asunder by two aspiring demagogues, ambitious of the command of a petty fortress in a wilderness, and the supreme control of eight and thirty men.

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CHAPTER V.

TRANSACTIONS WITH THE NATIVES—SUSPICIOUS CONDUCT OF GUACANAGARI.

1493. THE tragical story of the fortress, as gathered from the Indians at the harbour, received confirmation from another quarter. One of the captains, Melchor Maldonado, was dispatched along the coast to the east, in his caravel, to look out for some more favourable situation for a settlement. He had scarcely proceeded three leagues, when a canoe came off from the shore, in which were two Indians. One of them, the brother of Guacanagari, entreated him, in the name of the cacique, to come to land and visit him at the village where he lay ill. Maldonado immediately went to shore with two or three of his companions. They found Guacanagari confined by lameness to his hamac, surrounded by seven of his wives. The cacique expressed great regret at not being able to visit the admiral, whom he was extremely desirous to see. He related various particulars concerning the disasters of the garrison, and the part which he and his subjects had taken in its defence, showing his leg bound up from a wound which he had received. His story agreed with that already related. After treating the Spaniards with his accustomed respect and hospitality, he gave each of them at parting a present of some golden ornament.

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On the following morning, Columbus repaired in person to visit the cacique. To impress him with a superior idea of his present power and importance, he appeared with a numerous train of his principal officers, all richly dressed, or in glittering armour. They found Guacanagari reclining on a hamac of cotton net. He exhibited great emotion on beholding the admiral, and immediately adverted to the death of the Spaniards. As he related the disasters of the garrison he shed many tears, but dwelt particularly on the part he had taken in the defence of his guests, pointing out several of his subjects present who had received wounds in the battle. On regarding their scars, it was evident that the wounds had been received from Indian weapons.

Columbus was readily satisfied of the good faith of Guacanagari. When he reflected on the many proofs of an open and generous nature which he had given at the time of his shipwreck, he could not believe him capable of so dark an act of perfidy. An exchange of presents now took place. The cacique gave him eight hundred beads of a certain stone called ciba, which they considered highly precious, and one hundred of gold, a golden coronet, and three small calabashes filled with gold dust; and thought himself outdone in munificence, when presented with a number of glass beads, hawks' bells, knives, pins and needles, small mirrors, and ornaments of copper, which metal he seemed to prefer to gold*.

The wound from which Guacanagari suffered was in the leg, which had been violently bruised by a stone. At the request of Columbus, he permitted it to be examined by a surgeon who was present. On removing the bandages no signs of a wound were to be seen, although he shrunk with

* Letter of Dr. Chanca. Navarrete, Collec. T. 1.

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pain whenever the limb was handled*. As some time had elapsed since the battle, the external bruise might have disappeared, while a tenderness remained in the part. Several present, however, who had not been in the first voyage, and had witnessed nothing of the generous conduct of the cacique, looked upon his lameness as feigned, and the whole story of the battle a fabrication, to conceal his real perfidy. Father Boil especially, who was a friar of vindictive spirit, advised the admiral to make an immediate example of the chieftain. Columbus, however, viewed the matter in a different light. Whatever prepossessions he might have, were in favour of the cacique; his heart refused to believe in his criminality. Though conscious of innocence, Guacanagari might have feared the suspicions of the white men, and have exaggerated the effects of his wound; but the wounds of his subjects, made by Indian weapons, and the destruction of his village, were strong proofs to Columbus of the truth of his story. To satisfy his more suspicious followers, and to pacify the friar, without granting him a persecution, he observed that true policy dictated amicable conduct towards Guacanagari, at least until his guilt was fully ascertained. They had too great a force at present to apprehend any thing from his hostility, but violent measures, in this early stage of their intercourse with the natives, might spread a general panic, and impede all their operations in the island. Most of his officers concurred in this opinion; so it was determined, notwithstanding the inquisitorial suggestions of the friar, to take the story of the Indians for current truth, and to continue to treat them with friendship.

* Letter of Dr. Chanca. Navarrete, Collec. T. 1. Cura de Los Palacios, Cap. 120.

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At the invitation of Columbus, the cacique, though still apparently in pain from his wound*, accompanied him to the ships that very evening. He had wondered at the power and grandeur of the white men when they first visited his shores with two small caravels; but his wonder was infinitely increased on beholding a fleet riding at anchor in the harbour, and on going on board of the admiral's ship, which was a vessel of heavy burthen. Here he beheld a number of Caribs, who had been taken prisoners in the course of the voyage. So great was the dread of the timid inhabitants of Hayti for these fierce barbarians, that they contemplated them with fear and shuddering even though in chains, and turned with averted countenances from their frowning regards†. That the admiral had dared to invade these terrible beings in their very islands, and had dragged them, as it were, from their strong holds, was perhaps one of the greatest proofs to Guacanagari of the irresistible prowess of the white men.

Columbus took the cacique through the ship, and on every side he beheld new wonders. The various works of art, and the unknown productions of nature, the plants and fruits of the old world; domestic fowls of different kinds, cattle, sheep, swine and other animals brought to stock the island, all struck him with astonishment, but what most filled him with amazement was the sight of the horses. He had never seen any but the most diminutive quadrupeds, and was struck with admiration at the grandeur of these noble animals, their great strength, terrific appearance, yet perfect docility‡. He looked upon all these extraordinary objects as so many won-

* Hist. del Almirante, Cap. 49.

† Peter Martyr, Letter 153, to Pomponius Lœtus.

‡ Hist. del Almirante, ubi sup. Letter of Dr. Chanca.

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ders brought from heaven, which he still believed to be the native home of the white men.

On board of the ship were ten of the women delivered from the captivity of the Caribs. They were chiefly natives of the island of Boriquen, or Porto Rico. These soon attracted the notice of the cacique, who is represented to have been of an amorous complexion. He entered into conversation with them; for though these islanders spoke different languages, or rather, as is more probable, different dialects of the same language, they were able in general to understand each other. Among these women was one distinguished above her companions by a certain loftiness of air and manner. She had been much noticed and admired by the Spaniards, who had given her the name of Catalina. The cacique spoke to her repeatedly with great gentleness of tone and manner, pity in all probability being mingled with his admiration; for, though rescued from the hands of the Caribs, she and her companions were in a manner captives on board of the ship.

A collation was now spread before the chieftain, and Columbus endeavoured in every way to revive their former cordial intercourse. He treated his guest with every manifestation of perfect confidence, and talked of coming to live with him in his present residence, and of building houses in the vicinity. The cacique expressed much satisfaction at the idea, but observed that the situation of the place was unhealthy, which was indeed the case. Notwithstanding every demonstration of friendship, however, the cacique was evidently ill at ease. The charm of mutual confidence was broken. It was evident that the gross licentiousness of the garrison had greatly impaired the veneration of the Indians for their heaven-born visiters. Even the reverence for the symbols of the Christian faith, which Columbus endeavoured

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to inculcate as a grand means of civilization, was completely prostrated by the profligacy of its votaries. Though fond of ornaments, it was with the greatest difficulty the cacique could be prevailed upon by the admiral to suspend an image of the virgin about his neck, when he understood it to be an object of Christian adoration*.

The suspicions of the chieftain's guilt continued to gain ground with many of the Spaniards. Father Boil in particular, regarded him with a baleful eye, and privately advised the admiral, now that he had him securely on board of his ship, to detain him prisoner; but Columbus rejected the counsel of the crafty friar, as contrary to sound policy and honourable faith. It is difficult, however, to conceal lurking ill will; the heart will speak in the countenance, even though the tongue be mute. The cacique, accustomed, in his former intercourse with the Spaniards, to meet on every side with faces beaming with gratitude and friendship, could not but perceive the altered looks of cold suspicion, and secret hostility. Notwithstanding the frank and cordial hospitality of the admiral, therefore, he soon begged permission to return to land†.

The next morning there was an appearance of mysterious movement and agitation among the natives on shore. Of this the Spaniards could not comprehend the cause; as there was no longer that easy and unreserved communication between them, which formerly prevailed. A messenger from the cacique inquired of the admiral how long he intended to remain at the harbour, and was informed that he should sail on the following day. In the evening the brother of Gua-

* Hist. del Almirante, Cap. 49.

† Peter Martyr, Decad. 1, Lib. 2.

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canagari came on board, under pretext of bartering a quantity of gold. He was observed to converse in private with the Indian women, and particularly with Catalina, the one whose distinguished appearance had attracted the attention of Guacanagari. After remaining some time on board, he returned to the shore. It would seem, from subsequent events, that the warm heart of the cacique had been touched by the situation of this Indian beauty, and captivated by her charms, and that, with a kind of native gallantry, he had undertaken to deliver her from bondage.

At midnight, when the crew were buried in their first sleep, the intrepid Catalina awakened her companions, and proposed a bold attempt to regain their liberty. The ship was anchored full three miles from the shore, and the sea was rough; but these island women were accustomed to buffet with the waves, and to consider the water almost as their natural element. Letting themselves down from the side of the vessel with great caution and silence, they committed themselves to the vigour of their arms, and swam bravely for the shore. With all their precautions, they were overheard by the watch. The alarm was given, the boats were manned, and gave chase in the direction of a light blazing on the shore, an evident beacon for the fugitives. Notwithstanding all the exertions of the oar, such was the vigour of these sea nymphs, that they reached the land in safety. Four were retaken on the beach, but the heroic Catalina, with the rest of her companions, made good their escape into the forest.

When the day dawned, Columbus sent to Guacanagari to demand the fugitives, or if they were not in his possession, that he would have search made for them. The residence of the cacique, however, was silent and deserted; not an Indian was to be seen. Either conscious of the suspi-

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cions of the Spaniards, and apprehensive of their hostility, or desirous to enjoy his prize unmolested, the cacique had removed, with all his effects, his household and his followers, and had taken refuge with his island beauty in the interior. This sudden and mysterious desertion gave redoubled force to the doubts heretofore entertained, and Guacanagari was generally stigmatized as a traitor to the white men, and the perfidious destroyer of the garrison*.

* Peter Martyr, Decad. 1 Lib. 2. Letter of Dr. Chanca. Cura de los Palacios, Cap. 120. MS.

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CHAPTER VI.

FOUNDING OF THE CITY OF ISABELLA—MALADIES OF THE SPANIARDS.

1493. THE misfortunes which had befallen the Spaniards both by sea and land, in the vicinity of this harbour, had thrown a gloom round the neighbourhood. The ruins of the fortress, and the graves of their murdered countrymen were continually before their eyes; and the forests no longer looked beautiful, while there was an idea that treachery might be lurking in their shades. The silence and dreariness, also, caused by the desertion of the natives, gave a sinister appearance to the place. It began to be considered by the credulous mariners as under some baleful influence, or malignant star. These were sufficient objections to discourage the founding of a settlement in that superstitious age, but there were others of a more solid nature. The land in the vicinity was low, moist, and unhealthy, and there was no stone for building. Columbus determined, therefore, to abandon the place altogether, and found his projected colony in some more favourable situation. No time was to be lost. The animals on board of the ships were suffering from long confinement, and needed the reviving range, and the fresh herbage of the pasture; and the multitude of persons, unaccustomed to the sea, and pent up in the fleet, languished for the refreshment of the land. Reconnoitring expeditions were dispatched, therefore, in the lighter caravels,

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which scoured the coast in each direction, entering the rivers and harbours in search of an advantageous site for a colony. They were instructed also to make inquiries after Guacanagari, of whom Columbus, notwithstanding every suspicious appearance, still retained a favourable opinion. The expeditions returned, after ranging a considerable extent of coast, without success. There were fine rivers and secure ports, but the coast was low and marshy, and deficient in stone. The country was generally deserted, or if they saw any of the natives, they fled immediately to the woods. Melchor Maldonado had proceeded to the eastward, until he came to the dominions of a different cacique, who at first issued forth at the head of his warriors, with menacing aspect and a show of hostility, but was readily soothed into the most amicable disposition. From him he learnt that Guacanagari had retired from the plain to the mountains. Another party discovered an Indian concealed near a hamlet, having been disabled by a wound received from a lance when fighting against Caonabo. His account of the destruction of the fortress agreed with that of the Indians at the harbour, and concurred to vindicate the cacique from the charge of treachery. Thus the minds of the Spaniards continued full of doubt and perplexity, as to the real perpetrators of this dark and dismal tragedy.

Being convinced that there was no place in this part of the island favourable for a settlement, Columbus weighed anchor on the 7th of December, with the intention of seeking the port of La Plata. In consequence of adverse weather, however, he was obliged to put into a harbour about ten leagues east of Monte Christi; and on considering the place was struck with its advantages.

The harbour was spacious, and commanded by a point of land protected on one side by a natural rampart of rocks,

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and on another by an impervious forest, presenting a strong position for a fortress. There were two rivers, one large and the other small, watering a green and beautiful plain, and offering advantageous situations for mills. About a bow shot from the sea, on the banks of one of the rivers, was an Indian village. The soil appeared to be fertile, the waters to abound in excellent fish, and the climate to be temperate and genial; for the trees were in leaf, the shrubs in flower, and the birds in song, though it was the middle of December. They had not yet become familiarized with the temperature of this favoured island, where the rigours of winter are unknown, where there is a perpetual succession and even intermixture of fruit and flower, and where a smiling verdure reigns throughout the year.

Another grand inducement to form their settlement in this place, was information received from the Indians of the adjacent village, that the mountains of Cibao, where the gold mines were situated, lay at no great distance, and almost parallel to the harbour. It was determined, therefore, that there could not be a situation more favourable for their colony.

An interesting and animated scene now commenced. The troops and various persons belonging to the land service, and the various labourers and artificers to be employed in building, were disembarked. The provisions, articles of traffic, guns and ammunition for defence, and implements of every kind, were brought to shore; as were also the cattle and live stock, which had suffered excessively from long confinement, especially the horses. There was a general joy at escaping from the loathsome prison of the ships, and once more treading the firm green earth, and breathing the sweetness of the fields. An encampment was formed on the margin of the plain, around a basin or sheet of water, and in

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a little while the whole place was in activity. Thus was founded the first Christian city of the new world, to which Columbus gave the name of Isabella, in honour of his royal patroness.

A plan was formed, and streets and squares projected, according to which the place was to be built. The greatest diligence was then exerted in erecting a church, a public storehouse, and a residence for the admiral. These were built of stone; the private houses were constructed of wood, plaster, reeds, or such materials as the exigency of the case permitted; and for a short time every one exerted himself with the utmost zeal.

This animated scene was soon overcast by maladies which broke out among the people. Many were unaccustomed to the sea, and had suffered greatly from the confinement of the ships, and the sickness incident to voyages; their healths had likewise been affected by subsisting for a length of time on salt provisions, much of which was in an unwholesome state, and biscuit which was mouldy and decayed. They had been subject to great exposures on the land also, before houses could be built for their reception; for the exhalations of a hot and moist climate, and a new rank soil, the humid vapours from the rivers, and the stagnant air of close overwhelming forests, render the luxuriant wilderness a place of severe trial to constitutions accustomed to old and highly cultivated countries. The labour also of building the city, clearing fields, setting out orchards, and planting gardens, having all to be done with great haste, bore hard upon men, who, after tossing so long upon the ocean, stood in need of relaxation and repose.

The maladies of the mind, also, mingled with those of the body. Many, as has been shown, had embarked in the expedition with the most visionary and romantic expectations.

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Some had anticipated the golden regions of Cipango and Cathay, where they were to amass wealth without toil or trouble; others a region of Asiatic luxury, abounding with wonders and delights; and others a splendid and open career for gallant adventure, and chivalrous enterprize. What then was their disappointment to find themselves confined to the margin of an island, surrounded by impenetrable forests, doomed to struggle with the rudeness of a wilderness; to toil painfully for mere subsistence, and to attain every comfort by the severest exertion. As to gold, it was brought to them from various quarters, but in small quantities, and it was evidently to be procured only by patient and persevering labour. All these disappointments sank deep into their hearts; their spirits flagged as their golden dreams melted away; and the gloom of despondency aided the ravages of disease.

Columbus himself did not escape the prevalent maladies. The arduous nature of his enterprize; the responsibility under which he found himself, not merely to his followers, or to his sovereigns, but to the world at large, had kept his mind in continual agitation. The cares of so large a squadron; the incessant vigilance required not only against the lurking dangers of these unknown seas, but against the passions and follies of his followers, prone to sally forth into excesses in adventurous enterprizes of the kind; the distress he had suffered from the fate of his murdered garrison; and his uncertainty as to the conduct of the barbarous tribes by which he was surrounded; all these had harassed his mind and broken his rest, while on board of his ship. Since landing, new cares and toils had crowded upon him, which, added to the exposures incident to his situation in this new climate, completely overpowered his forces. Still, though confined for several weeks to his bed by severe indisposition,

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his energetic mind rose superior to the sufferings of the body, and he continued to give directions about the building of the city, and to superintend the general concerns of the expedition*.

* Hist. del Almirante, Cap. 50. Herrera, Hist. Ind. Decad. 1, Lib. 2, Cap. 10. Peter Martyr, Decad. 1, Lib. 2. Letter of Dr. Chanca, &c.

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CHAPTER VII.

EXPEDITION OF ALONZO DE OJEDA TO EXPLORE THE INTERIOR OF THE ISLAND—DISPATCH OF THE SHIPS TO SPAIN.

1493. THE ships having discharged their cargoes, it was necessary to send the greater part of them back to Spain. Here new anxieties pressed upon the mind of Columbus. He had hoped to find treasures of gold, and precious merchandise, accumulated by the men he had left behind; or at least the sources of wealthy traffic ascertained, by which he would have been enabled speedily to freight his vessels. The destruction of the garrison had defeated all those hopes. He was aware of the extravagant expectations entertained by the sovereigns and the nation. What would be their disappointment when the returning ships brought nothing but a tale of disaster! Something must be done, before the vessels sailed, to keep up the fame of his discoveries, and justify his own magnificent representations.

As yet he knew nothing of the interior of the island, and his sanguine imagination pictured it as abounding with riches. If it were really the island of Cipango, it must contain populous cities, existing very probably in some more cultivated region, beyond the lofty mountains with which it was intersected. All the Indians concurred in mentioning Cibao as the tract of country from whence they derived their gold.

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The very name of its cacique, Caonabo, signifying "the lord of the golden house," seemed to indicate the wealth of his dominions. The tract where the mines were said to abound, lay at a distance of but three or four days' journey, directly in the interior; Columbus determined, therefore, to send an expedition to explore it, previous to the sailing of the ships. If the result should confirm his hopes, he would then be able to send home the fleet with confidence, bearing tidings of the discovery of the golden mountains of Cibao*.

The person he chose for this enterprize was Don Alonzo de Ojeda, the same cavalier who has been already noticed for his daring spirit and great bodily force and agility. Delighting in all service of a hazardous and adventurous nature, Ojeda was the more stimulated to this expedition, from the formidable character of the mountain cacique, Caonabo, into whose dominions he was to penetrate. He set out from the harbour early in January, 1494, accompanied by a small force of well armed and determined men, several of them young and spirited cavaliers like himself. He struck directly southward into the interior. For the two first days the march was toilsome and difficult, through a country abandoned by its inhabitants; for a terror of the Spaniards seemed to have extended along the seaboard. On the second evening they came to a lofty range of mountains, which they ascended by an Indian path, winding up a steep and narrow defile, and they slept for the night at the summit. From hence, the next morning, they beheld the sun rise with great glory over a vast and delicious plain, covered with noble forests, studded with villages and hamlets, and enlivened by the shining waters of the Tague.

* Herrera, Hist. Ind. D. 1, L. 2, C. 10.

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Descending into this plain, Ojeda and his companions boldly entered the Indian villages. The inhabitants, far from being hostile, overwhelmed them with hospitality, and, in fact, impeded their journey by their kindness. They had also to ford many rivers in traversing this plain, so that they were five or six days in reaching the chain of mountains which locked up, as it were, the golden region of Cibao. They penetrated into this district without meeting with any other obstacles than those presented by the rude nature of the country. Caonabo, so redoubtable for his courage and ferocity, must have been in some distant part of his dominions; for he never appeared to dispute their progress. The natives received them with kindness; they were naked and uncivilized, like the other inhabitants of the island; nor were there any traces of the important cities which their imaginations had once pictured forth. They saw, however, ample signs of natural wealth. The sands of the mountain streams glittered with particles of gold; these the natives would skilfully separate, and frankly give to the Spaniards, without expecting a recompense. In some places they picked up large specimens of virgin ore, from the beds of the torrents, and stones streaked and richly impregnated with it. Peter Martyr affirms, that he saw a mass of rude gold weighing nine ounces, which Ojeda himself had found in one of the brooks*.

All these were considered as mere superficial washings of the soil, betraying the hidden treasures lurking in the deep veins, and rocky bosoms of the mountains, and only requiring the hand of labour to bring them into day. As the object of his expedition was merely to ascertain the nature of the country, Ojeda led back his little band to the harbour,

* P. Martyr, Decad. 1, Lib. 2.

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full of enthusiastic accounts of the golden promise of these mountains. A young cavalier of the name of Gorvalan, who had been dispatched at the same time on a similar expedition, and who had explored a different tract of country, returned with similar reports. These flattering accounts served for a time to reanimate the drooping and desponding colonists, and induced Columbus to believe that it was only necessary to explore the mines of Cibao, to open inexhaustible sources of riches. He determined, as soon as his health would permit, to repair in person to the mountains, and seek a favourable site for a mining establishment*.

The season was now propitious for the return of the fleet. Encouraged by the promising prospects he was enabled to hold out, Columbus lost no time in dispatching twelve of the ships, under the command of Antonio de Torres, retaining only five for the service of the colony.

By this opportunity he sent home specimens of the gold found among the mountains and rivers of Cibao, and of all such fruits and plants as were curious, or appeared to be valuable. He wrote in the most sanguine terms of the expeditions of Ojeda and Gorvalan, which last returned to Spain in the fleet. He repeated his confident anticipations of soon being able to make abundant shipments of gold, of precious drugs and spices; being prevented at present in the search for them by the sickness of himself and people, and the cares and labours required in building the infant city. He described the beauty and fertility of the island; its ranges of noble mountains; its wide abundant plains, watered by beautiful rivers; the quick fecundity of the soil, evinced in the luxuriant growth of the sugar-cane, and of various grains and vegetables brought from Europe.

* Hist. del Almirante, Cap. 50.

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As it would take some time, however, to obtain provisions from their fields and gardens, and the produce of their live stock, adequate to the subsistence of the colony, which consisted of about a thousand souls; and as they could not accustom themselves to the diet of the natives, Columbus requested present supplies from Spain. Their provisions were already growing scanty. Much of their wine had been lost from the badness of the casks; and in the infirm state of the colonists, they suffered greatly from the want of their accustomed nourishment. There was an immediate necessity of medicines, clothing, and arms. Horses were required, likewise, for the public works, and for military service; being found of great effect in awing the natives, who had the utmost dread of these animals. He prayed also for an additional number of workmen and mechanics, and men skilled in mining, and in smelting and purifying ore. He recommended various persons to the notice and favour of the sovereigns; among whom was Pedro Margarite, an Arragonian cavalier of the order of St. Jago, who had a wife and children to be provided for, and who, for his good services, Columbus begged might be appointed to a command in the order to which he belonged. In like manner he entreated patronage for Juan Aguado, who was about to return in the fleet, making particular mention of his merits. From both of these men he was destined to experience the most signal ingratitude.

In these ships he sent also the men, women, and children, taken in the Caribbee islands, recommending that they should be carefully instructed in the Spanish language, and the Christian faith. From the roving and adventurous nature of these people, and their general acquaintance with the various languages of this great archipelago, he thought that, when the precepts of religion and the lights of civiliza-

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tion had reformed their savage manners, and cannibal propensities, they might be rendered eminently serviceable as interpreters, and as means of propagating the doctrines of Christianity.

Among the many sound and salutary suggestions in this letter, there is one of a most pernicious tendency, written in that mistaken view of natural rights, prevalent at the day, but fruitful of so much wrong and misery in the world. Considering that the greater the number of these cannibal pagans transferred to the Catholic soil of Spain, the greater would be the number of their souls put in the way of salvation, he proposed to establish an exchange of them as slaves, against live stock, to be furnished by merchants to the colony. The ships to bring such stock were to land no where but at the harbour of Isabella, where the Carib captives would be ready for delivery. A duty was to be levied on each slave for the benefit of the royal revenue. In this way, the colony would be furnished with all kinds of live stock free of expense; the peaceful islanders would be freed from warlike and inhuman neighbours; the royal treasury would be greatly enriched; and a vast number of souls would be snatched from perdition, and carried, as it were, by main force to heaven. Such is the strange sophistry by which upright men may sometimes deceive themselves. Columbus feared the disappointment of the sovereigns in respect to the product of his enterprizes, and was anxious to devise some mode of lightening their expenses, until he could open some ample source of profit. The conversion of infidels, by fair means or foul, by persuasion or force, was one of the popular tenets of the day; and in recommending the enslaving of the Caribs, Columbus thought that he was obeying the dictates of his conscience, when he was in reality listening to the incitements of his interest. It is but just to add, that

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the sovereigns did not accord with his ideas; but ordered that the Caribs should be converted like the rest of the islanders: a command which emanated from the merciful heart of Isabella, who ever manifested herself the benign protectress of the Indians.

The fleet put to sea on the 2d of February, 1494. Though it brought back no wealth to Spain, yet expectation was kept alive by the sanguine letter of Columbus, and the specimens of gold which he transmitted; his favourable accounts were corroborated by letters from friar Boil, Dr. Chanca and other persons of credibility, and by the personal reports of Gorvalan. The sordid calculations of petty spirits were as yet overruled by the enthusiasm of generous minds, captivated by the lofty nature of these enterprizes. There was something wonderfully grand in the idea of thus introducing new races of animals and plants, of building cities, extending colonies, and sowing the seeds of civilization and of enlightened empire, in this beautiful but savage world. It struck the minds of learned and classical men with admiration, filling them with pleasing dreams and reveries, and seeming to realize the poetical pictures of the olden time. "Columbus," says old Peter Martyr, "has begun to build a city, as he has lately written to me, and to sow our seeds and propagate our animals! Who of us shall now speak with wonder of Saturn, Ceres, and Triptolemus, travelling about the earth, to spread new inventions among mankind? or of the Phœnicians who built Tyre and Sidon? or of the Tyrians themselves, whose roving desires led them to migrate into foreign lands, to build new cities, and establish new communities*?"

Such were the speculations of enlightened and benevolent men, who hailed with enthusiasm the discovery of the new

* Letter 153, to Pomponius Lœtus.

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world, not for the wealth it would bring to Europe, but for the field it would open for glorious and benevolent enterprise, and the blessings and improvements of civilized life which it would widely dispense through barbarous and uncultivated regions.

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CHAPTER VIII.

DISCONTENTS AT ISABELLA—MUTINY OF BERNAL DIAZ DE PIZA.

1494. THE embryo city of Isabella was rapidly assuming a form. A dry stone wall surrounded it, to protect it from any sudden attack of the natives; although the most friendly disposition was evinced by the Indians of the vicinity, who brought supplies of their simple articles of food, and gave them in exchange for European trifles. On the day of Epiphany, the 6th of February, the church being sufficiently completed, high mass was celebrated, with great pomp and ceremony, by friar Boil, and the twelve ecclesiastics. The affairs of the settlement being thus apparently in a regular train, Columbus, though still confined by indisposition, began to make arrangements for his contemplated expedition to the mountains of Cibao, when an unexpected disturbance in his little community for a time engrossed his attention.

The sailing of the fleet for Spain had been a melancholy sight to many whose terms of enlistment compelled them to remain on the island. Disappointed in their expectations of immediate wealth, disgusted with the labours imposed on them, and appalled by the maladies prevalent throughout the community, they began to look with horror upon the surrounding wilderness, as destined to be the grave of their

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hopes and of themselves. When the last sail disappeared, which was bearing their companions back to Spain, they felt as if completely severed from their country; and the tender recollections of home, which had been checked for a time by the novelty and bustle around them, rushed with sudden force upon their minds. To return to Spain, became their ruling idea; and the same want of reflection, which had hurried them into the enterprize, without inquiring into its real nature, now prompted them to extricate themselves from it, by any means however desperate.

Where popular discontents prevail, there is seldom wanting some daring spirit to give them a dangerous direction. One Bernal Diaz de Piza, a man of some standing, who had held a civil office about the court, had come out with the expedition as comptroller. He seems to have presumed upon his official powers, and to have had early differences with the admiral. Disgusted with his employment in the colony, he soon made a faction among the discontented, and proposed that they should take advantage of the indisposition of Columbus, to seize upon some or all of the five ships in the harbour, and return in them to Spain. It would be easy to justify their clandestine return, by preferring a complaint against the admiral, representing the fallacy of his enterprizes, and accusing him of gross deceptions and exaggerations, in his accounts of the countries he had discovered. It is probable that some of these people really considered him culpable of the charges thus fabricated against him; for on the disappointment of their avaricious hopes, they overlooked the real value of those fertile islands, which were to enrich nations by the produce of their soil. Every country was sterile and unprofitable in their eyes, that did not immediately teem with gold. Though they had continual proofs,

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in the specimens brought by the natives to the settlement, or furnished to Ojeda and Gorvalan, that the rivers and mountains in the interior abounded with ore, yet even these daily proofs were falsified in their eyes. One Fermin Cedo, a wrong-headed and obstinate man, who had come out as assayer and purifier of metals, had imbibed the same prejudice against the expedition with Bernal Diaz. He pertinaciously insisted that there was no gold in the island; or at least that it was found in such inconsiderable quantities as not to repay the search. He declared that the large grains of virgin ore brought by the natives had been melted; that they had been the slow accumulations of many years, having remained a long time in the families of the Indians, and been handed down from generation to generation. Other specimens, of a very large size, he pronounced of a very inferior quality, and that they had been debased with brass by the natives. Thus the words of this man outweighed the evidence of facts; and many joined him in the belief that the island was really destitute of gold. It was not until some time afterwards, that the real character of Fermin Cedo was ascertained, and the discovery made, that his ignorance was at least equal to his obstinacy and his presumption; qualities which are apt to enter largely into the compound of a meddlesome and mischievous man*.

Encouraged by such substantial co-operation, a number of the hot-heads of the colony concerted to carry the plan into immediate effect, and to take possession of the ships and make sail for Europe. The influence of Bernal Diaz de Pisa at court, would obtain for them a favourable hearing; and they trusted to their unanimous representations, to pre-

* Cura de los Palacios, Cap. 120. 122. MS.

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judice Columbus in the opinion of the public, ever fickle in its smiles, and most ready to turn suddenly and capriciously from the favourite it has most idolized.

Fortunately this mutiny was discovered before it proceeded to action. Columbus immediately ordered the ringleaders to be arrested. On making investigations, a memorial or information against himself, full of slanders and misrepresentations, was found concealed in the buoy of one of the ships. It was in the handwriting of Bernal Diaz. The admiral conducted himself with great moderation. Out of respect to the rank and station of Diaz, he forebore to inflict any punishment on him; but confined him on board of one of the ships to be sent to Spain for trial, together with the process or investigation of his offence, and the seditious memorial which had been discovered. Several of the inferior mutineers were punished according to the degree of their culpability, but not with the severity which their offence deserved. To guard against any recurrence of a similar attempt, Columbus ordered that all the guns and naval munitions should be taken out of four of the vessels, and put into the principal ship, which was given in charge to persons in whom he could place implicit confidence*.

This was the first time that Columbus exercised the right of punishing delinquents in his new government; and it immediately awakened the most violent animadversions. His measures, though necessary for the general safety, and characterized by the greatest lenity, were censured as arbitrary and vindictive. Already the disadvantage of being a foreigner among the people he was to govern, was clearly manifested. He had national prejudices to encounter, of all

* Herrera, Hist. Ind. Decad 1, L. 2, Cap. 11. Hist. del Almirante, C. 50.

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others the most general and illiberal. He had no natural friends to rally round him; whereas the mutineers had connexions in Spain, friends in the colony, and met with sympathy in every discontented mind. An early hostility was thus engendered against Columbus, which continued to increase throughout his life; and the seeds were sown of a series of factions and mutinies, which afterwards distracted the island.

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CHAPTER IX.

EXPEDITION OF COLUMBUS TO THE MOUNTAINS OF CIBAO.

1494. HAVING at length recovered from his long illness, and the mutiny at the settlement being effectually checked, Columbus prepared for his immediate departure for Cibao. He intrusted the command of the city and the ships, during his absence, to his brother, Don Diego, appointing able persons to counsel and assist him. Don Diego is represented by Las Casas, who knew him personally, as a man of great virtue and discretion; of a gentle and pacific disposition, and more characterized by simplicity than shrewdness. He was sober in his attire, wearing almost the dress of an ecclesiastic; and Las Casas thinks he had secret hopes of preferment in the church*. Indeed, Columbus intimates as much when he mentions him in his will.

As the admiral intended to build a fortress in the mountains, and to form an establishment for working the mines, he took with him the necessary artificers, workmen, miners, munitions, and implements. He was about to enter the territories of the redoubtable Caonabo also; it was important, therefore, to take with him a force that should not only secure him against any warlike opposition, but that should spread through the country a formidable idea of the power

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind. L. 1, C. 82. MS.

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of the white men, and deter the Indians from any future act of violence, either towards communities or wandering individuals, whom chance might throw into their power. Every healthy person, therefore, who could be spared from the settlement, was put in requisition, together with all the cavalry that could be mustered; and every arrangement was made to strike the savages with the display of military splendour. On the 12th of March, Columbus set out at the head of above four hundred men, well armed and equipped, with shining helmets and corslets; with arquebusses, lances, swords, and cross-bows, and followed by a multitude of the neighbouring Indians. They sallied forth from the city in battle array, with banners flying, and sound of drum and trumpet. Their march for the first day was across the plain, which lay between the sea and the mountains, fording two rivers, and passing through a fair and verdant country. They encamped in the evening, in the midst of pleasant fields, at the foot of a wild and rocky pass of the mountains.

The ascent of this rugged defile presented formidable difficulties to the little army, encumbered as it was with various implements and munitions. There was nothing but an Indian foot path, winding among rocks and precipices, or through brakes and thickets, entangled by the rich vegetation of a tropical forest. A number of high spirited young cavaliers volunteered to open a route for the army. The youthful chivalry of Spain were accustomed to this kind of service in the Moorish wars; where it was often necessary, on a sudden, to open roads for the march of troops, and the conveyance of artillery, across the mountains of Granada. Throwing themselves in the advance, with labourers and pioneers, whom they stimulated by their example, as well as by promises of liberal reward, they soon constructed the first road formed in the new world; and which was called

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El Puerto de los Hidalgos, or the Pass of the Gentlemen, in honour of the gallant cavaliers who effected it*.

On the following day, the army toiled up this steep defile, and arrived to where the gorge of the mountain opened into the interior. Here a land of promise suddenly burst upon their view. It was the same glorious prospect which had delighted Ojeda and his companions. Below lay a vast and delicious plain, painted and enamelled, as it were, with all the rich variety of tropical vegetation. The magnificent forests presented that mingled beauty and majesty of vegetable forms, known only to these generous climates. Palms of prodigious height, and wide-spreading mahogany trees, towered out of a chaos of variegated foliage. A universal freshness and verdure was maintained by numerous streams, which wandered gleaming through the deep bosom of the woodland; while various villages and hamlets, peeping from among the trees, and the smoke of others rising out of the midst of the forests, gave signs of a numerous population. The luxuriant landscape extended as far as the eye could reach, until it appeared to melt away and mingle with the horizon. The Spaniards gazed with rapture upon this soft voluptuous country, which seemed to realize their ideas of a terrestrial paradise; and Columbus, struck with its vast extent, gave it the name of the Vega Real, or Royal Plain†.

Having descended the rugged pass, the army issued upon the plain, in military array, with great clangor of warlike instruments. When the Indians beheld this shining band of warriors, glittering in steel, emerging from the mountains, with prancing steeds and flaunting banners, and heard for the first time their rocks and forests echoing to the din of drum

* Hist. del Almirante, C. 50.

† Las Casas, Hist. Ind. Lib. 1, Cap. 90. MS.

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and trumpet, they might well have taken such a wonderful pageant for something supernatural.

In this way Columbus disposed his forces, whenever he approached a populous village; placing the cavalry in front, for the horses inspired a mingled terror and admiration among the natives. Las Casas observes that at first they supposed the rider and his horse to be one animal, and nothing could exceed their astonishment at seeing the horseman dismount; a circumstance which shows that the alleged origin of the ancient fable of the Centaurs is at least founded in nature. On the approach of the army, the Indians generally fled with terror, and took refuge in their houses. Such was their simplicity, that they merely put up a slight barrier of reeds at the portal, and seemed to consider themselves perfectly secure. Columbus, pleased to meet with such artlessness, ordered that these frail barriers should be scrupulously respected, and the inhabitants allowed to remain in their fancied security*. By degrees their fears were allayed, through the mediation of the interpreters, and the distribution of trifling presents. Nothing could then surpass their kindness; and the march of the army was continually retarded by the hospitality of the numerous villages through which it passed. Such was the frank communion among these people, that the Indians who accompanied the army, entered without ceremony into the houses, helping themselves to any thing of which they stood in need, without exciting surprise or anger in the inhabitants; the latter offered to do the same with respect to the Spaniards, and seemed astonished when they met with a repulse. This, it is probable, was the case merely with respect to articles of food; for we are told that the Indians were not careless in

* Las Casas, Lib. Sup. L. 1, C. 90.

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their notions of property, and the crime of theft was one of the few which were punished among them with great severity. Food, however, is generally open to free participation in savage life, and is rarely made an object of barter, until habits of trade have been introduced by the white men. The untutored savage, in almost every part of the world, scorns to make a traffic of hospitality.

After a march of five leagues across this plain, they arrived at the banks of a large and beautiful stream, called by the natives, the Yagui, but to which the admiral gave the name of the River of Reeds. He was not aware that it was the same stream, which, after winding through the Vega, falls into the sea near Monte Christi, and which in his first voyage he had named the River of Gold. On its green banks the army encamped for the night, animated and delighted with the beautiful scenes through which they had passed. They bathed and sported in the waters of the Yagui, enjoying the amenity of the surrounding landscape, and the delightful airs which prevail in that genial season. "For though there is but little difference," observes Las Casas, "from one time to another, in all the year in this island, and in most parts of these Indias, yet in the months from September to May, it is like living in paradise*."

On the following morning, they crossed this stream by the aid of canoes and rafts, swimming the horses over. For two days they continued their march through the same kind of rich level country, diversified by noble forests, and watered by abundant streams, several of which descended from the mountains of Cibao, and were said to bring down gold dust mingled with their sands. To one of these, the limpid waters of which ran over a bed of smooth round pebbles,

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind. L. 1, C. 90. MS.

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Columbus gave the name of Rio Verde, or Green River, from the verdure and freshness of its banks. In the course of this march, they passed through numerous villages, where they experienced generally the same reception. The simple inhabitants fled at their approach, putting up their slight barricadoes of reeds, but as before were easily won to familiarity, and tasked their limited means to entertain the strangers.

Thus penetrating into the midst of this great island, where every scene presented the wild luxuriance of beautiful but uncivilized nature, they arrived, on the evening of the second day, to a chain of lofty and rugged mountains, which formed a kind of barrier to the Vega. These, Columbus was told, were the golden mountains of Cibao, whose region commenced at their rocky summits. The country now began to grow rough and difficult; and the people being wayworn, they encamped for the night at the foot of a steep defile, which led up into the mountains; and pioneers were sent in advance to open a road for the army. From this place they sent back mules for a supply of bread and wine, their provisions beginning to grow scanty, for they had not as yet accustomed themselves to the food of the natives, which was afterwards found to be very digestible, and well suited to the climate.

On the next morning they resumed their march up a narrow and steep glen, winding among cragged rocks, where they were obliged to lead the horses. Arrived at the summit, they once more enjoyed a prospect of the delicious Vega, which here presented a still grander appearance, stretching far and wide on either hand, like a vast verdant lake. This noble plain, according to Las Casas, is eighty leagues in length, and from twenty to thirty in breadth, and of incomparable beauty.

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They now entered Cibao, the famous region of gold, which, as if nature delighted in contrarieties, displayed a miser-like poverty of exterior, in proportion to its hidden treasures. Instead of the soft luxuriant landscape of the Vega, they beheld chains of rocky and sterile mountains, scantily clothed with lofty pines. The trees in the valleys also, instead of possessing the rich tufted foliage common to other parts of the island, were meagre and dwarfish, excepting such as grew on the banks of streams. The very name of the country bespoke the nature of the soil, ciba, in the language of the natives, signifying a stone. Still, however, there were deep glens and shady rifts among the mountains, freshened by rivulets of the most limpid water, where the green herbage, and the strips of woodland, were the more delightful to the eye from the neighbouring sterility. But what consoled the Spaniards for the asperity of the soil, was to observe particles of gold glittering among the sands of these crystal streams, which, though scanty in quantity, they regarded as earnests of the wealth locked up within the mountains.

The natives having been previously visited by the exploring party under Ojeda, came forth to meet them with great alacrity; bringing them articles of food, but above all, grains and particles of gold, which they had collected in the brooks and torrents, seeing how eagerly that metal was coveted by the Spaniards. From the quantities of gold dust in every stream, Columbus was convinced that there must be several mines in the vicinity. He had met with specimens of amber and lapis lazuli, though in very small quantities; and thought that he had discovered a mine of copper. He was now about eighteen leagues from the settlement; the rugged nature of the mountains made a communication, even from this distance, laborious. He gave up the idea, therefore, of

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penetrating further into the country, and determined to establish a fortified post in this neighbourhood, with a large number of men, as well to work the mines, as to explore the rest of the province. He accordingly selected a pleasant situation on an eminence almost entirely surrounded by a small river called the Jánique, the waters of which were as pure as if distilled, and the sound of its current musical to the ear. In its bed were found curious stones of various colours, large masses of beautiful marble, and pieces of pure jasper. From the foot of the height extended one of those graceful and verdant plains called by the Indians savannahs, which was freshened and fertilised by the river*.

On this eminence, Columbus ordered a strong fortress of wood and plaster to be erected, capable of defence against any attack of the natives; and protected by a deep ditch on the side where the river did not extend. To this fortress he gave the name of St. Thomas, intended as a gravely pleasant, though pious, reproof of the incredulity of Fermin Cedo and his doubting adherents, who obstinately refused to believe that the island produced gold, until they beheld it with their eyes and touched it with their hands†.

The natives having heard of the arrival of the Spaniards in their vicinity, came flocking from various parts, anxious to obtain European trinkets. The admiral signified to them that any thing would be given in exchange for gold. Upon hearing this, some of them ran to a neighbouring river, and gathering and sifting its sands, returned in a little while with considerable quantities of gold dust. One old man brought two pieces of virgin ore weighing an ounce, and thought himself richly repaid when he received a hawks'

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind. L. 1, C. 90. MS.

† Idem.

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bell. On remarking that the admiral was struck with the size of these specimens, he affected to treat them with contempt, as insignificant, intimating by signs, that in his country, which lay within half a day's journey, they sometimes found pieces of gold as big as an orange. Other Indians brought grains of gold weighing ten and twelve drachms, and declared, that in the country from whence they got them, there were masses of ore as large as the head of a child*. As usual, however, these golden tracts were always in some more remote valley, or along some rugged and sequestered stream; and the wealthiest spot was sure to be at the greatest distance; for the land of promise is ever beyond the mountain.

* Peter Martyr, Decad. 1, Lib. 3.

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CHAPTER X.

EXCURSION OF JUAN DE LUXAN AMONG THE MOUNTAINS —CUSTOMS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE NATIVES— RETURN OF COLUMBUS TO ISABELLA.

1494. WHILE the admiral remained among the mountains, superintending the building of the fortress, he dispatched a young cavalier of Madrid, named Juan de Luxan, with a small band of armed men, to range about the country, and explore the whole of the province; which from the reports of the Indians appeared to be equal in extent to the kingdom of Portugal. Luxan returned after a few days' absence, with the most satisfactory accounts. He had traversed a great part of Cibao, which he had found more capable of cultivation than had at first been imagined. It was generally mountainous, and the soil covered with large round pebbles of a blue colour, yet there was good pasturage in many of the valleys. The mountains also, being watered by frequent showers, produced grass of surprisingly quick and luxuriant growth, often reaching to the saddles of the horses. The forests seemed to Luxan to be full of valuable spices, he being deceived by the odours emitted by those aromatic plants and herbs which abound in the woodlands of the tropics. There were great vines, also, climbing to the very summits of the trees, and bearing clusters of grapes already ripe, full of juice, and of a pleasant flavour. Every

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valley and glen possessed its stream, large or small, according to the size of the neighbouring mountain, and all yielding more or less gold, in small particles, showing the universal prevalence of that precious metal. Luxan was supposed likewise to have learned from the Indians many of the secrets of their mountains; to have been shown the parts where the richest ore was found, and to have been taken to the most golden streams. On all these points, however, he observed a discreet mystery, communicating the particulars to no one but the admiral*.

The fortress of St. Thomas being nearly completed, Columbus gave it in command to Pedro Margarite, the same cavalier whom he had recommended to the favour of the sovereigns, and left with him a garrison of fifty-six men. He then set out on his return for Isabella. On arriving at the banks of the Rio Verde, or Green River, in the Royal Vega, he found a number of Spaniards on their way to the fortress with supplies. He remained, therefore, a few days in the neighbourhood, searching for the best fording place of the river, and establishing a route between the fortress and the harbour. During this time he resided in the Indian villages, endeavouring to accustom his people to the food of the natives; as well as to inspire the latter with a mingled feeling of good will and reverence for the white men.

From the report of Luxan, Columbus had derived some information concerning the character and customs of the natives, and he acquired still more from his own observations in the course of his sojourn among the tribes of the mountains and the plains. And here a brief notice of a few of the characteristics and customs of these people may be interesting. They are given, not merely as observed by the

* Peter Martyr, Decad. 1, Lib. 3.

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admiral and his officers during this expedition, but as recorded some time afterwards in a crude dissertation, by a friar of the name of Roman, a poor hermit, as he styled himself, of the order of St. Jeronimo, who was one of the colleagues of father Boil, and resided for some time in the Vega as a missionary.

Columbus had already discovered the error of one of his opinions concerning these islanders, formed during his first voyage. They were not so entirely pacific, nor so ignorant of warlike arts, as he had imagined. He had been deceived by the enthusiasm of his own feelings, and by the gentleness of Guacanagari and his subjects. The casual descents of the Caribs had compelled the inhabitants of the seaboard to acquaint themselves with the use of arms. Some of the mountain tribes near the coast, particularly those on the part which looked towards the Caribbee islands, were of a more hardy and warlike character than those of the plains. Caonabo, also, the Carib chieftain, had introduced something of his own warrior spirit into the centre of the island. Yet, generally speaking, the habits of the people were mild and gentle. If wars sometimes occurred among them, they were of short duration, and unaccompanied by any great effusion of blood; and in general they mingled amicably and hospitably with each other.

Columbus had also at first indulged in the error that the natives of Hayti were destitute of all notions of religion; and he had consequently flattered himself that it would be the easier to introduce into their minds the doctrines of Christianity; not aware that it is more difficult to light up the fire of devotion in the cold heart of an atheist, than to divert the flame to a new object when it is already enkindled. There are few beings, however, so destitute of reflection, as not to be impressed with the conviction of an overruling

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deity: a nation of atheists never existed. It was soon discovered that these islanders had their creed, though of a vague and simple nature. They believed in one supreme being who inhabited the sky, who was immortal, omnipotent and invisible, to whom they ascribed an origin, having a mother but no father*. They never addressed their worship directly to him, but employed inferior deities, called Zemes, as messengers and mediators. Each cacique had his tutelar deity of this order, whom he invoked and pretended to consult in all his public undertakings, and who was reverenced by his people. He had a house apart, as a temple to this deity, in which was an image of his Zemi, carved of wood, of stone, or shaped of clay or cotton, and generally of some monstrous and hideous form. Each family and each individual, had likewise a particular Zemi, or protecting genius, like the Lares and Penates of the ancients. These were placed in every part of their houses, or carved on their furniture. Some had them of a small size, and bound them about their foreheads when they went to battle. They believed their Zemes to be transferable, with all their powers, and often stole them from each other. When the Spaniards came among them, they often hid their idols, lest they should be taken away. They believed that these Zemes presided over every object in nature, each having a particular charge or government. They influenced the seasons and the elements; causing sterile or abundant years, stirring up hurricanes and whirlwinds, and tempests of rain and thunder, or sending sweet and temperate airs and fruitful showers. They governed the seas and forests, the springs and fountains; like the Nereids, the Dryads, and the Satyrs of antiquity. They gave success in hunting and fishing. They

* Escritura de Fr. Roman. Hist. del Almirante.

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guided the waters of the mountains into safe channels, and led them down to wander through the plains, in gentle brooks and peaceful rivers; or, if incensed, they caused them to burst forth into rushing torrents and overwhelming floods, inundating and laying waste the valleys.

The natives had their Butios, or priests, who pretended to hold communion with these Zemes. They practised rigorous fasts and ablutions, and inhaled the powder, or drank the infusion of a certain herb, which produced a temporary intoxication or delirium. In the course of this process, they professed to have trances and visions, and that the Zemes revealed to them coming events, or instructed them in the treatment of maladies. They were in general great herbalists, and well acquainted with the medicinal properties of trees and vegetables. They cured diseases through their knowledge of simples, but always with many mysterious rites and ceremonies and supposed charms, chanting, and burning a light in the chamber of the patient, and pretending to exorcise the malady, to expel it from the mansion, and to send it to the sea or to the mountain*.

Their bodies were painted or tattooed with figures of the Zemes, which were regarded with horror by the Spaniards, as so many representations of the devil; and the butios, esteemed as a kind of saints by the natives, were abhorred by the former as necromancers. These butios often assisted the caciques in practising deceptions upon their subjects, speaking oracularly through the Zemes, by means of hollow tubes; inspiriting the Indians to battle by predicting success, or dealing forth such promises or menaces as might suit the purposes of the chieftain.

* Oviedo, Cronica, L. 5, C. 1.

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There is but one of their solemn religious ceremonies, of which any record exists. The cacique proclaimed a day when a kind of festival was to be held in honour of his Zemes. His subjects assembled from all parts, and formed a solemn procession; the married men and women decorated with their most precious ornaments, the young females entirely naked. The cacique, or the principal personage, marched at the head, beating a kind of drum. In this way they proceeded to the consecrated house, or temple, in which were set up the images of the Zemes. Arrived at the door, the cacique seated himself on the outside, continuing to beat his drum, while the procession entered; the females carrying baskets of cakes ornamented with flowers, and singing as they advanced. These offerings were received by the butios, or priests, with loud cries, or rather howlings. They broke the cakes after they had been offered to the Zemes, and distributed the morsels to the heads of families, who preserved them carefully throughout the year, as preventives of all adverse accidents. This done, at a signal the females danced, singing songs in honour of the Zemes, or in praise of the heroic actions of their ancient caciques. The whole ceremony finished by invoking the Zemes to watch over and protect the nation*.

Beside the Zemes, each cacique had three idols or talismans, which were mere stones, but which were held in great reverence by themselves and their subjects. One they supposed had the power to produce abundant harvests; another to remove all pain from women in travail; and the third to call forth rain or sunshine; when either was required. Three of these were sent home by Columbus to the sovereigns†.

* Charlevoix, Hist. St. Doming. L. 1, p. 56.

† Hist. del Almirante, Cap. 61.

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The ideas of the natives with respect to creation, were vague and undefined. They gave their own island of Hayti priority of existence over all others; and believed that the sun and moon originally issued out of a cavern in the island, to give light to the world. This cavern still exists, about seven or eight leagues from Cape Francois. It is about one hundred and fifty feet in depth, and nearly the same in height, but very narrow. It receives no light but from the entrance, and from a round hole in the roof, from whence it was said the sun and moon issued forth to take their places in the sky. The vault was so fair and regular, that it appeared a work of art rather than of nature. In the time of Charlevoix, the figures of various Zemes were still to be seen cut in the rocks, and there were the remains of niches, as if to receive statues. This cavern was held in great veneration. It was painted, and adorned with green branches, and other simple decorations. There were in it two images or Zemes. When there was a want of rain, the natives made pilgrimages and processions to it, with songs and dances, bearing offerings of fruits and flowers*.

They believed that mankind issued from another cavern; the large men from a great aperture, the small men from a little cranny. They were for a long time destitute of women; but, wandering on one occasion near a small lake, they saw certain animals among the branches of the trees, which proved to be women. On attempting to catch them, however, they were found to be as slippery as eels, so that it was impossible to hold them. At length they employed certain men, whose hands were rendered rough by a kind of leprosy. These succeeded in securing four of these slippery females, from whom the world was peopled.

* Charlevoix, Hist. St. Doming. L. 1, p. 60.

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While the men inhabited this cavern, they dared only venture forth at night, for the sight of the sun was fatal to them, turning them into trees and stones. There was a cacique named Vagoniona, who sent one of his men forth from the cave to fish, who, lingering at his sport until the sun had risen, was turned into a bird of melodious note, the same that Columbus mistook for the nightingale. They added, that yearly about the time when he had suffered this transformation, he comes in the night, with a mournful song, bewailing his misfortune: which is the cause why that bird always sings in the night season*.

Like most savage nations, they had also a tradition concerning the universal deluge, equally fanciful with most of the preceding; for it is singular how the human mind, in its natural state, is apt to account, by trivial and familiar causes, for great events. They said, that there once lived in the island a mighty cacique, whose only son conspiring against him, he slew him. He afterwards collected and cleaned his bones, and preserved them in a gourd, as was the custom of the natives with the reliques of their friends. On a subsequent day, the cacique and his wife opened the gourd to contemplate the bones of their son, when to their astonishment several fish, great and small, leaped out. Upon this the cacique closed the gourd, and placed it on the top of his house, boasting that he had the sea shut up within it, and could have fish whenever he pleased. Four brothers, however, born at the same birth, and curious intermeddlers, hearing of this gourd, came during the absence of the cacique to peep into it. In their carelessness they suffered it to fall upon the ground, when it was dashed to pieces, and there

* Fray Roman. Hist. Almirante. Peter Martyr, Decad. 1, Lib. 9.

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issued forth a mighty flood, with dolphins and sharks and great tumbling whales; and the water spread until it overflowed the earth, and formed the ocean, leaving only the tops of the mountains uncovered, which are the present islands*.

They had singular modes of treating the dying and the dead. When the life of a cacique was despaired of, they strangled him out of a principle of respect, rather than suffer him to die like the vulgar. Common people were extended in their hamacs, bread and water placed at their head, and they were then abandoned to die in solitude. Sometimes they were carried to the cacique, and if he gave his decision or consent, they were strangled. After death, the body of a cacique was opened, dried at a fire, and preserved; of others the head only was treasured up as a memorial, or occasionally a limb. Sometimes the whole body was interred in a cave, with a calabash of water and a loaf of bread; sometimes it was consumed with fire, in the house of the deceased.

They had confused and uncertain notions of the existence of the soul, when separated from the body. They believed in the apparitions of the departed at night, or by daylight in solitary places, to lonely individuals; sometimes advancing as if to attack them, but upon the traveller's striking at them they vanished, and he struck merely against trees or rocks. Sometimes they mingled among the living, and were only to be known by having no navels. The Indians, fearful of meeting with these apparitions, disliked to go about alone, and in the dark.

They had an idea of a place of reward, to which the spirits of good men repaired after death; where they were re-united to the spirits of those they had most loved during life, and to

* Escritura de Fray Roman, pobre Heremito.

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all their ancestors. Here they enjoyed uninterruptedly, and in perfection, those pleasures which constituted their felicity on earth. They lived in shady and blooming bowers, with beautiful women, and banquetted on delicious fruits. The paradise of these happy spirits was variously placed, almost every tribe assigning some favourite spot in their native province. Many, however, concurred in describing this region as being near a lake in the western part of the island, in the beautiful province of Xaragua. Here there were delightful valleys, covered with a delicate fruit called the mamey, about the size of an apricot. They imagined that the souls of the deceased remained concealed among the airy and inaccessible cliffs of the mountains during the day, but descended at night into these happy valleys, to regale on this consecrated fruit. The living were sparing, therefore, in eating of it, lest the souls of their friends should suffer for want of their favourite nourishment*.

The dances to which the natives seemed so immoderately addicted, and which had been at first considered by the Spaniards mere idle pastimes, were found to be often ceremonials of a serious and mystic character. They form indeed a singular and important feature throughout the customs of the aboriginals of the new world. In these are typified, by signs well understood by the initiated, and, as it were, by hieroglyphic action, their historic events, their projected enterprizes, their huntings, their ambuscades, and their battles, resembling, in some respects, the pyrrhic dances of the ancients. Speaking of the prevalence of these dances among the natives of Hayti, Peter Martyr observes that they performed them to the chant of certain metres and bal-

* Hist. del Almirante, C. 61. Peter Martyr, Decad. 1, Lib. 9. Charlevoix, Hist. St. Doming. Lib. 1.

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lads handed down from generation to generation, in which were rehearsed the deeds of their ancestors. "These rhymes or ballads," he adds, "they call Areytos, and as our minstrels are accustomed to sing to the harp or lute, so do they in like manner sing these songs, and dance to the same, playing on timbrels made of shells of certain fishes. These timbrels they call maguey. They have also songs and ballads of love, and others of lamentation or mourning. Some also to encourage them to the wars, with every of them tunes agreeable to the matter."

It was for these dances, as has been already observed, that they were so eager to procure hawks' bells, suspending them about their persons, and keeping time with their sound to the cadence of the singers. This mode of dancing to a ballad, has been compared to the dances of the peasants in Flanders during the summer: and to those prevalent throughout Spain, to the sound of the castinets, and to the wild popular chants said to be derived from the Moors; but which in fact existed before their invasion, among the Goths who overrun the peninsula*.

The earliest history of almost all nations has generally existed in rude heroic rhymes and ballads, and in the lays of the minstrels; and such was the case with the areytos of the Indians. When a cacique died, says Oviedo, they sang in dirges his life and actions, and all the good that he had done came to memory. Thus they formed the ballads or areytos which remained for history†. Some of these ballads were of a sacred character, containing their traditional notions of theology, and the superstitions and fables which comprised their religious creed. None were permitted to

* Mariana, Hist. Esp. L. 5, C. 1.

† Oviedo, Cronica de las Indias, L. 5, C. 3.

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sing these but the sons of caciques, who were instructed in them by their butios or priests. They were chanted before the people, on solemn festivals, like those already described, accompanied by the sound of a kind of drum, made from a hollow tree*.

Such are a few of the characteristics remaining upon record of these simple people, who perished from the face of the earth before their customs and creeds were thought of sufficient importance to be investigated. The present work does not profess to enter into detailed accounts of the countries and people discovered by Columbus, otherwise than as they may be useful for the illustration of his history; and perhaps the foregoing are carried to an unnecessary length; but they may serve to give greater interest to the subsequent transactions of the island.

Many of these particulars, as has been observed, were gathered by the admiral and his officers during their excursion among the mountains, and their sojourn in the plain. The natives appeared to them a singularly idle and improvident race, indifferent to most of the objects of human anxiety and toil. They were impatient of all kinds of labour, scarcely giving themselves the trouble to cultivate the yuca root, the maize and the potato, which formed main articles of subsistence. For the rest, their streams abounded with fish; they caught the utia or coney, the guana, and various birds, and they had a perpetual banquet from the fruits spontaneously produced by their groves. Though the air was sometimes cold among the mountains, yet they preferred submit-

* Fray Roman. Hist. del Almirante, C. 61. P. Martyr, D. 1, L. 9. Herrera, Hist. Ind. Decad. 1, L. 3, C. 4. Oviedo, L. 5, C. 1.

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ting to a little temporary suffering, rather than take the trouble to construct garments from the gossampine cotton, which abounded in their forests. In general an easy indolence, a careless repose of body and mind, prevailed among them. They loitered away existence in vacant inactivity under the shade of their trees, or amusing themselves occasionally with various games and pastimes.

In fact, they were destitute of all powerful motives to toil; being free from most of those wants which doom mankind in civilized life, or in less genial climes, to incessant labour. They had no sterile winter to provide against, particularly in the valleys and the plains, where, according to Peter Martyr, "the island enjoyed perpetual spring time, and was fortunate with continual summer and harvest. The trees flourished throughout the year, and the meadows continued always green." "There is no province, nor any region," he again observes, "which is not notable for the majesty of mountains, the fruitfulness of vales, the pleasantness of hills, and delectableness of plains, with abundance of fair rivers running through them. There never was any noisome animal found in it, nor yet any ravening fourfooted beast; no lion, nor bear; no fierce tigers nor crafty foxes, nor devouring wolves; but all things blessed and fortunate*."

In the soft regions of the Vega, the circling seasons brought each its store of fruits; and while some were gathered in full maturity, others were ripening on the boughs; and buds and blossoms gave promise of still future abundance. What need was there of garnering up, and anxiously providing for coming days, to men who lived in a perpetual

* P. Martyr, Decad. 3, L. 9. English translation by R. Eden. London, 1555.

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harvest? What need, too, of toilfully spinning, or labouring at the loom, where a genial temperature prevailed throughout the year, and neither nature nor custom prescribed the necessity of clothing?

The hospitality which characterises men in such a simple and easy mode of existence, was evinced towards Columbus and his followers during their sojourn in the Vega. Wherever they went, it was a continual scene of festivity and rejoicing. The natives hastened from all parts, bearing them presents, and laying the treasures of their groves and streams and mountains at the feet of beings, whom they still considered as descended from the skies, to bring blessings to their island.

Having accomplished the purposes of his residence in the Vega, Columbus, at the end of a few days, took leave of its hospitable inhabitants, and resumed his march for the harbour, returning with his little army through the lofty and rugged gorge of the mountains, called the Pass of the Hidalgos. As we accompany him in imagination over the rocky height, from whence the Vega first broke upon the eye of the Europeans, we cannot help pausing, to cast back a look of mingled pity and admiration over this beautiful but devoted region. The dream of natural liberty, of ignorant content, and loitering idleness, was as yet unbroken; but the fiat had gone forth; the white man had penetrated into the land; avarice, and pride, and ambition, and pining care and sordid labour were soon to follow, and the indolent paradise of the Indian to disappear for ever.

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CHAPTER XI.

ARRIVAL OF COLUMBUS AT ISABELLA—SICKNESS OF THE COLONY.

1494. It was on the 29th of March that Columbus arrived at Isabella, highly satisfied with his expedition into the interior. The appearance of every thing in the vicinity of the harbour was calculated to increase his anticipations of future prosperity. The plants and fruits of the old world, which he was endeavouring to introduce into the island, gave promise of rapid increase. The orchards, fields and gardens were in a great state of forwardness. The stones of various fruits had produced young plants; the sugar-cane had taken wonderfully to the soil; a native vine, trimmed and dressed with care, had yielded grapes of tolerable flavour; and cuttings from European vines already began to form their clusters. On the 30th of March, a husbandman brought to Columbus ears of wheat which had been sown in the latter part of January. The smaller kind of garden herbs came to maturity in sixteen days, and the larger kind, such as melons, gourds, pompions, and cucumbers, were fit for the table within a month after the seed had been put into the ground. The soil, moistened by brooks, and rivers, and frequent showers, and stimulated by an ardent sun, possessed those principles of fecundity, which surprise the

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stranger, accustomed to less vigorous climates, by the promptness and prodigality of vegetation.

The admiral had scarcely returned to Isabella, when a messenger arrived from Pedro Margarite, the commander at fort St. Thomas, informing him that the Indians of the vicinity had manifested unfriendly feelings; abandoning their villages, and shunning all intercourse with the white men; and that Caonabo was assembling his warriors, and secretly preparing to attack the fortress. The fact was, that the moment the admiral had departed, the Spaniards, no longer awed by his presence, had as usual listened only to their passions, and had exasperated the natives by wresting from them their gold, and wronging them with respect to their women. Caonabo also had seen with impatience these detested intruders planting their standard in the very midst of his mountains, and he knew that he had nothing to expect from them but vengeance.

The tidings from Margarite, however, caused but little solicitude in the mind of Columbus. From what he had seen of the Indians in the interior, he had no apprehensions from their hostility. He knew their weakness and their awe of white men; and above all, he confided in their terror of the horses, which they regarded with trembling as ferocious beasts of prey, obedient to the Spaniards, but ready to devour their enemies. He contented himself, therefore, with sending Margarite a reinforcement of twenty men, with a supply of provisions and ammunition, and detaching thirty men to open a road between the fortress and the port.

What gave Columbus real and deep anxiety, was the sickness, the discontent, and dejection, which continued to increase in the settlement. The same principles of heat and humidity, which gave such fecundity to the fields, were

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fatal to the people. The exhalations from undrained marshes and a vast continuity of forest, and the action of an ardent sun upon a reeking vegetable soil, produced intermittent fevers, and various other maladies so trying to European constitutions in the uncultivated countries of the tropics. Many of the Spaniards suffered also under the torments of a disease hitherto unknown to them; the scourge of their licentious intercourse with the Indian females. Thus the greater part of the colonists were either confined by positive illness, or reduced to great debility. The stock of medicines was soon exhausted; there was a lack of medical aid, and of the watchful attendance which is even more important than medicine to the sick. Every one who was well, was either engrossed by the public labours, or by his own wants and cares; having to perform all menial offices for himself, even to the cooking of his provisions. The public works, therefore, languished, and it was impossible to cultivate the soil in a sufficient degree to produce a supply of the fruits of the earth. Provisions began to fail. Much of the stores brought from Europe had been wasted on board ship, or suffered to spoil through carelessness. Much had perished on shore, from the warmth and humidity of the climate. It seemed impossible for the colonists to accommodate themselves to the food of the natives; and their infirm condition required the aliments to which they had been accustomed. To avert an absolute famine, therefore, it was necessary to put the people on short allowance even of the damaged and unhealthy provisions which remained. This immediately caused loud and factious murmurs, in which many of those in office, who ought to have supported Columbus in his measures for the common safety, took a leading part. Among these was father Boil, a friar as turbulent

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as he was crafty. He had been irritated, it is said, by the rigid impartiality of Columbus; who in enforcing his salutary measures made no distinction of rank or persons, and put the friar and his household on a short allowance, as well as the rest of the community.

In the midst of this general discontent the bread began to grow scarce. The stock of flour was exhausted, and there was no mode of grinding corn but by the tedious and toilsome process of the hand-mill. It became necessary, therefore, to erect a mill immediately; and other works were required equally important to the welfare of the settlement. Many of the workmen, however, were ill, some feigned greater sickness than they really suffered; for there was a general disinclination to all kinds of labour, which were not to produce immediate wealth. In this emergency, Columbus put every healthy person in requisition; and as the cavaliers and gentlemen of rank required food as well as the lower orders, they were called upon to take their share in the common labour. This was considered a deadly degradation by many youthful hidalgos, of high blood and haughty spirit, and they refused to obey the summons. Columbus, however, was a strict disciplinarian, and felt the importance of making his authority respected. He resorted, therefore, to strong and compulsory measures, and enforced their obedience. This was another cause of the deep and lasting hostilities that sprang up against him. It aroused the immediate indignation of every person of birth and rank in the colony, and drew upon him the resentment of several of the proud families of Spain. He was inveighed against as an arrogant and upstart foreigner, who, inflated with a sudden acquisition of power, and consulting only his own wealth and aggrandizement, was trampling upon the rights and dig-

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nities of Spanish gentlemen, and insulting the honour of the nation.

Columbus may have been too strict and indiscriminate in his regulations. There are cases in which even justice may become oppressive, and where the severity of the law should be tempered with indulgence. What was mere toilsome labour to a common man, was humiliation and disgrace to a Spanish cavalier. Many of these young men had come out, not in the pursuit of wealth, but with romantic dreams, inspired by his own representations; hoping no doubt to distinguish themselves by heroic achievements and chivalrous adventure, and to continue in the west the career of arms which they had commenced in the recent wars of Granada. Others had been brought up in soft luxurious indulgence, in the bosoms of opulent families, and were little calculated for the rude perils of the seas, the fatigues of the land, and the hardships, the exposures and deprivations which attend a new settlement in the wilderness. When they fell ill their case soon became incurable. The ills of the body were increased by the sickness of the heart. They suffered under the irritation of wounded pride, and the morbid melancholy of disappointed hope; their sick bed was destitute of all the tender ministry and soothing consolation to which they were accustomed, and they sunk into the grave in all the sullenness of despair, cursing the day that they ever left their country.

The venerable Las Casas, and after him Herrera, records with much solemnity a popular belief current in the island at the time of his residence there, and connected with the untimely fate of these cavaliers.

In after years, when the seat of the colony was removed from Isabella, on account of its unhealthy situation, the

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city fell to ruin, and was abandoned. Like all decayed and deserted places, it soon became an object of awe and superstition to the common people, and no one ventured to enter its gates. Those who passed near it, or hunted the wild swine which abounded in the neighbourhood, declared that they heard appalling voices issue from within its walls by night and day. The labourers became fearful, therefore, to cultivate the fields adjacent. The story went, adds Las Casas, that two Spaniards happened one day to wander among the ruined edifices of the place. On entering one of the solitary streets, they beheld two rows of men, evidently from their stately demeanour, hidalgos of noble blood, and cavaliers of the court. They were richly attired in the old Castilian mode, with rapiers by their sides, and broad travelling hats, such as were worn at the time. The two men were astonished to behold persons of their rank and appearance apparently inhabiting that desolate place, unknown to the people of the island. They saluted them, and inquired when and whence they had arrived. The cavaliers maintained a gloomy silence, but courteously returned the salutation by raising their hands to their sombreros or hats, in taking off which their heads came off also, and their bodies stood decapitated. The whole phantom assemblage then vanished. So great was the astonishment and horror of the beholders, that they had nearly fallen dead, and remained stupified for several days*.

The foregoing legend is curious as illustrating the superstitious character of the age, and especially of the people, with whom Columbus had to act. It shows also the deep and gloomy impression made upon the minds of the com-

* Las Casas, Hist. Ind. L. 1, C. 92. MS. Herrera, Hist. Ind. Decad. 1, L. 2, C. 12.

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mon people, by the death of these cavaliers, which operated materially to increase the unpopularity of Columbus; as it was mischievously represented that they had been seduced from their homes by his delusive promises, and sacrificed to his private interests.

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CHAPTER XII.

DISTRIBUTION OF THE SPANISH FORCES IN THE INTERIOR—PREPARATIONS FOR A VOYAGE TO CUBA.

1494. THE increasing discontents of the motley population of Isabella, and the rapid consumption of the scanty stores which remained, were causes of great anxiety to Columbus. He was desirous of proceeding on another voyage of discovery, but it was indispensable, before sailing, to place the affairs of the island in such a state as to secure tranquillity. He determined, therefore, to send all the men that could be spared from Isabella, into the interior; with orders to visit the territories of the different caciques, and to explore the island. By this means they would be roused and animated; they would become accustomed to the climate, and to the diet of the natives; and such a force would be displayed as to overawe the machinations of Caonabo, or any other hostile cacique. In pursuance of this plan, every healthy person, not absolutely necessary to the concerns of the city or the care of the sick, was put under arms; and a little army mustered, consisting of two hundred and fifty crossbow-men, one hundred and ten arquebussiers, sixteen horsemen, and twenty officers. The general command of the forces was intrusted to Pedro Margarite, in whom Columbus had great confidence, as a noble Catalonian, and a cavalier of the order of Santiago. Alonzo de Ojeda was to

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conduct the army to the fortress of St. Thomas, where he was to succeed Margarite in the command, and the latter was to proceed with the main body of the troops on a military tour, in which he was particularly to explore the province of Cibao, and subsequently the other parts of the island.

Columbus wrote a long and earnest letter of instructions to Margarite, by which to govern himself in a service requiring such great circumspection. He charged him, above all things, to observe the greatest justice and discretion in respect to the Indians, protecting them from all wrong and insult, and treating them in such a manner as to secure their confidence and friendship. At the same time, they were to be made to respect the property of the white men, and all thefts were to be severely punished. Whatever provisions were required from them for the subsistence of the army, were to be fairly purchased, by persons whom the admiral appointed for that purpose: the purchases were to be made in the presence of the agent of the comptroller. If the Indians refused to sell the necessary provisions, then Margarite was to interfere and compel them to do so, acting, however, with all possible gentleness, and soothing them by kindness and caresses. No traffic was to be allowed between individuals and the natives, being displeasing to the sovereigns and injurious to the service: and it was always to be kept in mind, that their majesties were more desirous of the conversion of the natives, than of any riches to be derived from them.

A strict discipline was to be maintained in the army, all breach of orders to be severely punished, the men to be kept together, and not suffered to wander from the main body, either singly or in small parties, so as to expose themselves to be cut off by the natives; for, he observed, though these people were pusillanimous, yet there were no people so

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apt to be perfidious and cruel as cowards, seldom sparing the life of an enemy when in their power*.

These judicious instructions, which, if followed, might have preserved an amicable intercourse with the natives, are more especially deserving of notice, because Margarite disregarded them all, and by his disobedience brought trouble on the colony, obloquy on the nation, destruction on the Indians, and unmerited censure on Columbus.

In addition to the foregoing orders there were particular directions for the surprising and securing of the persons of Caonabo and his brothers. The warlike character of that chieftain, his artful policy, extensive power, and implacable hostility, rendered him a dangerous enemy. The measures proposed were not the most open and chivalrous, but Columbus thought himself justifiable in opposing stratagem to stratagem, with a subtle and sanguinary foe.

On the 9th of April Alonzo de Ojeda sallied forth from Isabella at the head of the forces, amounting to nearly four hundred men. On arriving at the River del Oro, in the Royal Vega, he learnt that three Spaniards coming from the fortress of St. Thomas had been robbed of their effects by five Indians whom a neighbouring cacique had sent to assist them in fording the river: and that the cacique, instead of punishing the thieves, had countenanced them, and shared their booty. Ojeda was a quick impetuous soldier, whose ideas of legislation were all of a military kind. Having caught one of the thieves he inflicted summary justice upon him by ordering his ears to be cut off in the public square of the village; he then seized the cacique, his son and nephew,

* Letter of Columb. Navarrete, Collec. T. 2, Document No. 72.

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and sent them in chains to the admiral; which done, he pursued his march for the fortress.

In the meantime the prisoners arrived at Isabella, in deep dejection. They were accompanied by a neighbouring cacique, who, relying upon the merit of various kindnesses which he had shown to the Spaniards, came to plead for their forgiveness. His intercessions appeared to be of no avail. Columbus felt the importance of striking an awe into the minds of the natives in regard to the property of the white men. He ordered, therefore, that the prisoners should be taken to the public square with their hands tied behind them, their crime and punishment proclaimed by the crier, and their heads struck off. Nor was this a punishment disproportioned to their own ideas of justice, for we are told that the crime of theft was held in such abhorrence among them, that though not otherwise sanguinary in their laws, they punished it with impalement*. It is not probable, however, that Columbus really meant to carry the sentence into effect. At the place of execution, the prayers and tears of the friendly cacique were redoubled, pledging himself that there should be no repetition of the offence. The admiral at length made a merit of yielding to his entreaties and released the prisoners. Just at this juncture a horseman arrived from the fortress, who, in passing by the village of the captive cacique, had found five Spaniards in the power of the Indians. The sight of his horse had put the multitude to flight, though upwards of four hundred in number. He had pursued the fugitives, wounding several with his lance, and had brought off his countrymen in triumph.

* Oviedo, Hist. Ind. Lib. 5, Cap. 3.

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Convinced by this circumstance that nothing was to be apprehended from the hostilities of these timid people so long as his orders were obeyed, and confiding in the distribution he had made of his forces, both for the tranquillity of the colony and the island, Columbus prepared to depart on the prosecution of his discoveries. To administer the affairs of the island during his absence, he formed a junto, of which his brother Don Diego was president, and father Boil, Pedro Fernandez Coronal, Alonzo Sanchez Caravajal, and Juan de Luxan were counsellors. He left his two largest ships in the harbour, being of too great a size and draft of water to explore unknown coasts and rivers, and he took with him three caravels, the Niña or Santa Clara, the San Juan, and the Cardera.

END OF VOLUME I.

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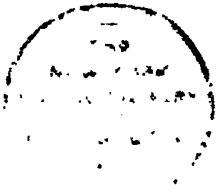
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